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ABSTRACT

The YALA journal is an annual publication of the Young Adult Learning Academy (YALA) in New York City, New York. This journal, one of many YALA publications and projects, was designed to encourage students to assume active roles in their education and to present their ideas, feelings, and craft to others. The YALA was established in 1984 to provide educational services for young people who had dropped out of school. In order to enter YALA, students must be between 16 and 24 years of age and read below the eighth-grade level. The 1990 journal was produced by a special class of full-time students who served as writers, editors, production helpers, and artists. Fifty-seven authors and five illustrators contributed almost 200 illustrations, photographs, prose, and poetry. This issue of the YALA journal contains seven sections: (1) One Life to Live; (2) The New Start; (3) Roots, Vibes, and Culture; (4) YALA Students Speak Out; (5) Secrets and Emotions; (6) All My Children; and (7) Memories. Lists of YALA staff, community-based organizations, and sponsoring agencies are included. (NLA)

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YALA JOURNAL 1990

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Acknowledgements

The YALA JOURNAL is an annual publication of the Young Adult Learning Academy (YALA). This year's Journal was produced by a special class of fulltime students who served as writers, editors, production helpers and artists, a multi-talented staff. They were assisted by YALA instructors.

Anya Achtenberg helped students in the delicate craft and development of their own writing. With Sallyann Keith they read and evaluated almost 200 contributions from students all over the school. They typed these contributions into computers and met with both teachers for the final, difficult selection. Jodi Cohen held a weeklong workshop to produce the artwork. William Jung worked with students individually to produce and develop original photographs. Michael Filippi coordinated the final production with help in layout and design by Anya, Sallyann and the students. This year the Journal has offered an experience of teamwork from start to finish, with the students taking a leadership role in decision making.

The Journal is just one of many YALA publications and projects designed to encourage students to assume active roles in their education and to present their ideas, feelings and craft to others. The results of their efforts make us all proud. I want to thank everyone involved in the creation of YALA Journal 6.

The Young Adult Learning Academy was established in 1984 to provide educational services for young people who had dropped out of school. In order to enter YALA, students must be between 16 and 24 years of age and read below the eighth grade level. More than 1,000 young people participate in our program each year.

YALA was developed by the Mayor's Office of Youth Services, the New York City Department of Employment and the New York City Board of Education. In 1989, YALA became a program of the City University of New York.

I wish to express thanks to the agencies that provide financial support to YALA:
New York City Adult Literacy Initiative
New York City Department of Employment
New York City Board of Education
New York State Legislature through CUNY

I want to thank especially Regina Peruggi, CUNY Associate Dean of Adult and Continuing Education, who has generously supported YALA's students and staff since YALA became part of CUNY in 1987. Our best wishes to Regina in her new position as President of Marymount Manhattan College.

Peter Kleinbard
Director, YALA
May 1990

Index to Authors

Alexandra Alexis 6
Tabitha Beale 70
Andrew Bell 36
Carletta Bender 8
Tawana Blunt 80
Keith Bullock 25
Charles Butler 75
Rodney Campbell 20
Luz Carrion 43
Sheila Cousar 35
Lloyd Daniels 35
Tony Davis 33, 53
Iovani DeJesus 30
Corinne Dixon 6, 14, 52, 54
Denval Dwyer 24
Rosa Figueroa 40, 74, 82
Meritza Garcia 48, 49, 68
Sharon Garrick 67
Wanda Gilliam 22
Jackeline Gonzalez 34
Robin Greathouse 65
Robert Griffith 34
Cassandra Hayes 9
Debra Henderson 35
Latoya Holland 50, 54, 59
Edwin Hopkins 8
Sophia James 61
Anthony Johnson 19
Tracy Johnson 29
Yvonne Jones 13, 66
Cheronda King 72
Charisse Matos 27
April Mojica 10, 23, 29, 38
Kim Montalvo 81, 83
David Moore 34, 71
Sandy Morris 51, 55
Carol Mosley 28
Adali Ramos 2, 32, 41, 74
Paulette Ravenell 22
Tyesha Richardson 11, 56
Linda Rivera 35
Jose Roman 23
Lottice Roulhac 35
Marten Salandy 34
Cynthia Saliva 68
Sharon Smith 28, 57, 64
Kevin Snuggs 44
Yesenia Steven 50, 60
Dennis Sumlin 85
Javone Summers 58, 59
Alicia Tanks 41
Ana Velez 67
Denise Walker 34
Stanislaus (Joey) Webster 18
Louis White 12
Christopher Wilson 24
Gamal Wright 26

Index to Illustrators

Raymond Bradley 11, 31, 40, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 72, 82, 85
Yvonne Jones 28, 66
Ashton Mayers 36
Adali Ramos ..... Cover, 1,12, 20, 26, 42, 52
Yesenia Stevens 13

Dear YALA Community,

The YALA Journal 6 came to light because of the work of many people, but, in the main, it was part of the daily labors of the Fulltime Journal Class, who read hundreds of student submissions, discussed and voted on them, and ordered them into chapters. The work published here reflects the students' deep awareness, sorrow and anger over present problems in our society, as well as their growing knowledge of history and its effects on the present. These words are filled with their gratitude to those who have come before, and their joy and concern for the children of this world. These writers show their ability to come to terms with their own pasts, their delight in their own energies, and their ability to use their strength and intelligence to make things better in the world.

There were many shining moments in this process of creating the Journal, moments when the students took full responsibility, or worked out differences of opinion, or gave full appreciation to the work of others. There were moments, as well, of frustration and annoyance, impatience and intolerance, as with any group of people who come together to bring out a publication, but it is clear that each student and involved staff member made a special contribution and that somehow a team was created. The loss of any one member of that team would have been a sad loss for this Journal.

Many fine pieces of writing do not appear here because of lack of space. We hope that the writers whose work was not published will understand that the process of selecting work also involved a great deal of learning. There is always an element of personal opinion in such a process that cannot be relied upon to determine the value of your work. Remember, you are the one who has the last word on your writing and the value of its message.

We all hope that the students who have begun to tell their stories here, as well as the others whose wonderful work is hidden somewhere in their student files or available in other YALA publications, will continue to tell their stories in their words and actions. NO ONE ELSE CAN DO IT! Our world needs what you have to say, and needs you to live up to your best words.

With our love and appreciation,
GO AHEAD!

Sallyann & Anya

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YALA JOURNAL 1990
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CONTENTS

1 One Life to Live
5 The New Start
17 Roots, Vibes and Culture
34 Yala Students Speak Out
37 Secrets and Emotions
63 All My Children
73 Memories

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ONE LIFE TO LIVE

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Please Dismiss

Please Dismiss
1 year old crack addicts,
2 year old orphans,
3 year old rape victims,
4 year old abused children,
5 year old mentally ill kids,
Please Dismiss them God, for they didn't ask for this life of confusion.

Please Dismiss
6 year old AIDS patients,
7 year old nymphomaniacs,
8 year olds cursing like sailors,
9 year old drug dealers,
10 year old prostitutes,
Please Dismiss them God, for they are just products of the environment.

Please Dismiss
Hypodermic needles on our shores,
Oil spills on the sea water,
Fishes floating dead from toxins,
Excuse the smell cause it might make you nauseous,
Medical waste floating in the ocean,
Seals getting clubbed to death,
Please Dismiss this manmade destruction, God, since we're busy making Hell on Earth.

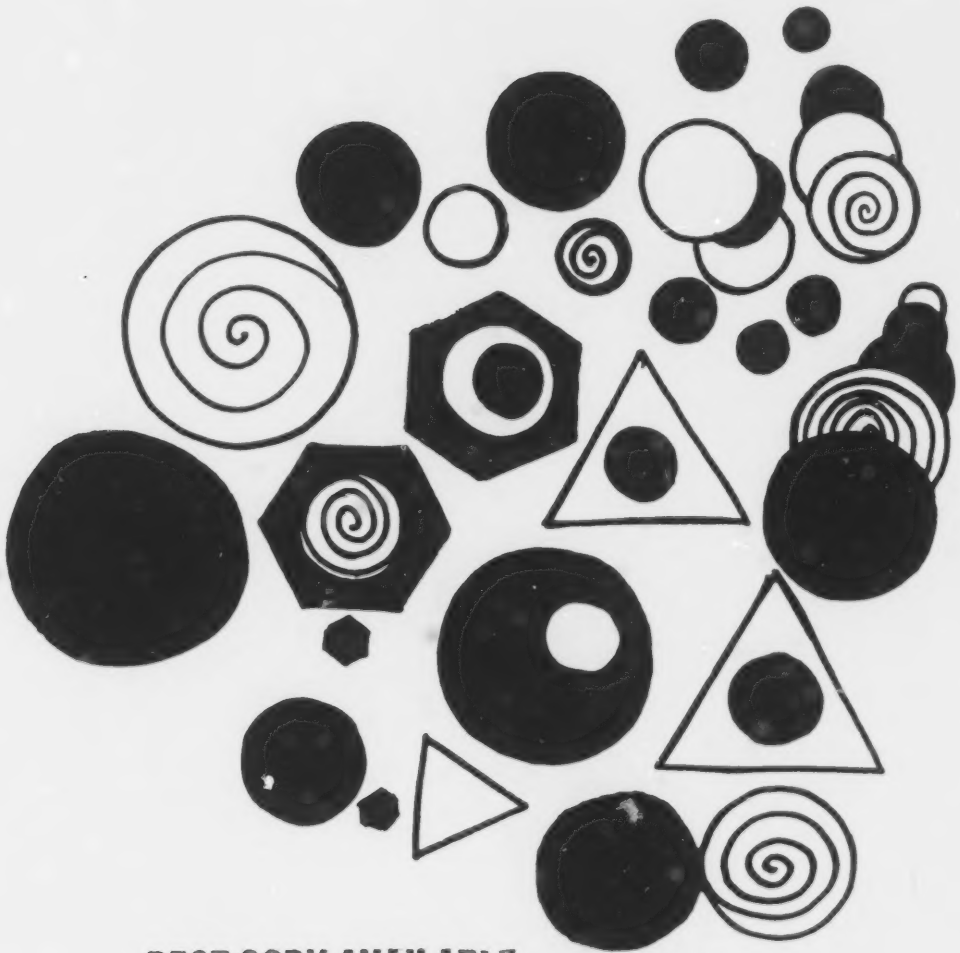
Please Dismiss
The neighborhood junkie,
The neighborhood rapist,
The neighborhood pimp,
The neighborhood slut,
The neighborhood alcoholic,
The neighborhood extortionist,
The neighborhood gangsters,
The neighborhood pickpockets,
The neighborhood pushers,
The neighborhood dirty cops,
The neighborhood crackhead teachers,
The neighborhood thieves,
The neighborhood homicidal maniacs,

(Continued)

(Continued)

The neighborhood suicidal freaks,
The neighborhood black market,
The neighborhood gigolo,
The neighborhood bum,
The neighborhood crackhead students,
The neighborhood racist,
The neighborhood false preachers,
The neighborhood dwellers,
Please Dismiss my neighborhood, God, for the righteous are few and the evil are plentiful.

Adali Ramos



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THE NEW START

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Each of Us

Each of us with our secret gift
magic potions
waiting to be shared
waiting to be aired
each of us a half, a whole,
a mind, a soul, a heart
and yet a part of
a better richer world,
looking for the door,
the key, the you, the me,
the we
growing day by day
looking for the way
what I always dreamed
and never saw
always thought
but never knew
until at last,
I discover
that the gift
I always sought
was you!

Alexandra Alexis

You Can Do This

You can do this,
my mind tells me you can do this.

You have no choice,
but to do this.

When will you ever make something out of your life?

You started it,
finish what you started,
Don't back out.

Think about it,
think about it hard and long.
Don't be weak
Be strong.

Don't think negative,
Think positive.

In the end
you'll be the one who's sure to win.
So keep on moving
Don't stop

You have a destination to be reached.
You have no choice

You can do this.

Corinne Dixon

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God has given us two great things:

The beauty of sight
The power of our voice

But we use them to judge

The color of one's skin
The speech of one's tongue

Keep an open mind!

Edwin M. Hopkins

Dignity and Pride

As I just sit here and think
I think about the positive and negative
Sometimes I wonder why people are
so cruel and wicked towards each other.

This is America, a free country,
and the white man still seems
to have us under control.

But I am a black woman,
with so much dignity and pride
I'm going to stand up
with a positive attitude
and say thank God I'm alive.

Carletta Bender

Unique

The thing that makes my community unique is that most of the people in the neighborhood are professional people who go out to work everyday. The community is well organized because the neighborhood people contribute to the community. When there are block parties, they go around to businesses like McDonald's and they give them something to help towards the block party, such as food and money. The bakery gives cake, and the meat market gives out a case of chicken. They do for their community. They support the people that give them their business.

When the summertime is here, the block has a special day called Kids' Day when they do all kinds of things with the kids. There are different kinds of races and they give all the kids T-Shirts. Next summer the block association plans on getting together for a trip to Disney World.

This year I helped out with Kids' Day. I went around to the businesses to collect donations. The cleaners gave a check for $100.00. One store gave two cases of soda. The bakery gave us a cake that said Happy Kids' Day. I had asked my little sisters to come dance for Kids' Day. The block association gave my sisters a trophy with their names on it. Now the people on the block association want my sisters to come every year to perform for Kids' Day. My little sisters were really glad that they had received the trophy. They went home happy and bragging to all their friends. That made me proud of my sisters because they took out time to share their talent with other people. The block association sent out thank-you notes to all the businesses that contributed to make Kids' Day a success.

I feel that my community is unique because we have some older people who have lived in the community for years. Some have been living on the block since 1956. They are nice, friendly people. They really care about the community. Mr. Edwards comes outside and makes sure that the front of his house is clean. He sweeps in front of other people's houses as well. In the summertime Mrs. Edwards grows vegetables in her garden and she gives them to neighborhood people. These people are not going to let outsiders who don't belong to the community come and destroy it because they have put so much in the community.

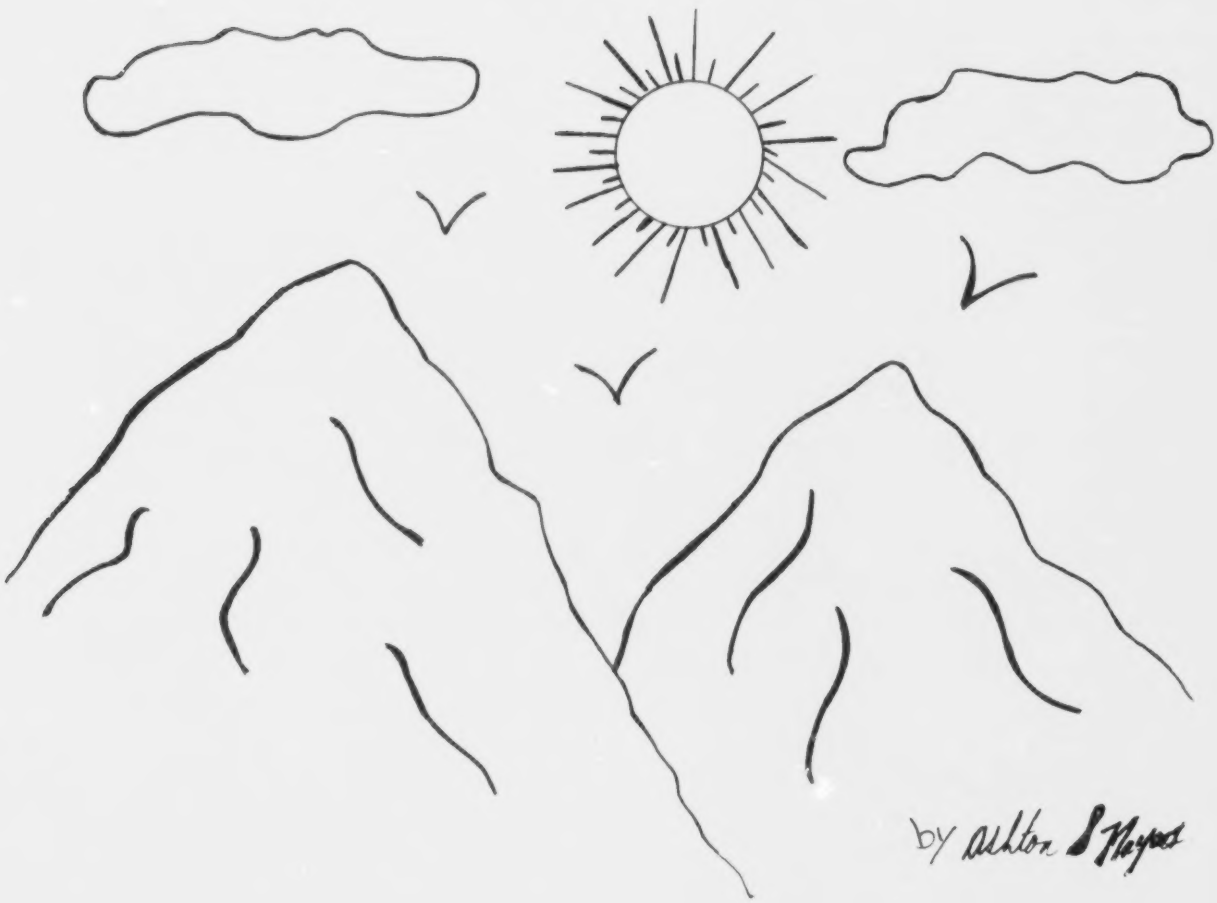
The problem in my community is with drugs. I feel that the people who use drugs are responsible for it. If they don't support the drug dealers by buying the drugs, then the dealers would have to move on somewhere else. This problem has caused the community to change in many different ways. You see all kinds of strange people walking around begging just to get enough money so they can get high. They walk the streets all times of night. The females stand in the middle of Fulton Street stopping cars and looking like whores. They make it bad for other people. The people of the community can prevent the problem by sticking together and getting these drug dealers and crackheads out of there. I think the time has come for us to say we don't want this and we're going to do something about this problem.

Cassandra Hayes

April

April rainy-day
Breaking from the cold.
Drizzle drazzle on my barren tree, the park lake swollen.
Water breaking, like that of a mother about to give birth,
is that of April clouds breaking water giving life to earth.
Wet. Budding. Green. Seems more vivid than it's ever been.
Girls' and boys' bodies flowering in the new harvest;
boy meets girl sharing umbrellas in April showers.

April Mojica



Love

Love is what you make it.

Love has its good times,
and love has its bad times.

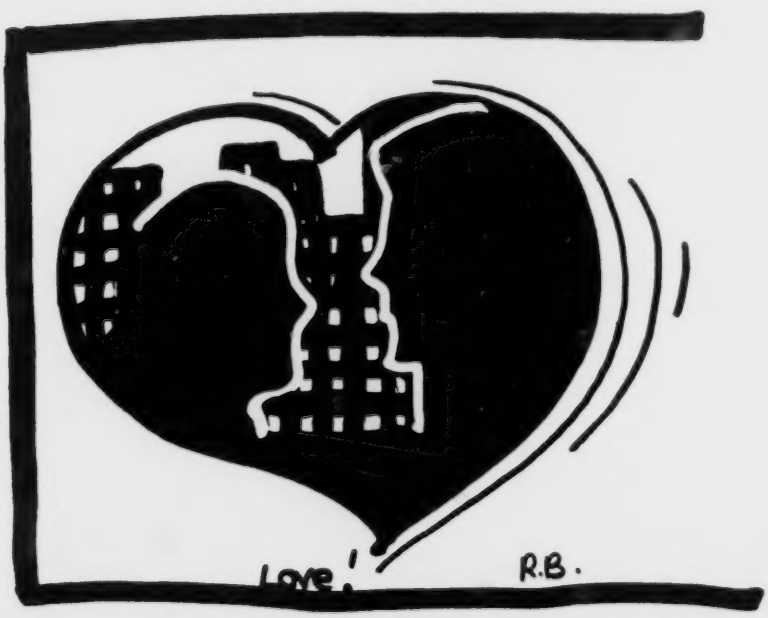
Love is something special.

You won't know love until it taps you on the shoulder.
No one can tell you the true meaning of love.
They can only tell you what they felt love was to them.
The only way you'll know love,
is when you experience it yourself.

Love is a very powerful word,
so when you say it,
it's very important to mean it.

Love can make and break a person
when it's not from the heart.

Tyesha Richardson



Both Bitter and Sweet

Life is a mixture of sunshine and rain
laughter and teardrops
pleasure and pain
low tides and high tides
mountains and plains,
triumphs, defeats
and losses and gains
but always in all ways
God guiding and leading
and He alone knows
what we are most needing
and if we accept them
as gifts of his love
we will be blessed
from our father above

Louis White

People

People are always looking
Looking for reasons
Looking for answers
Looking for help
Looking for faith
Looking for love
Looking to be safe
Looking lonely and scared
And most of all looking to God
to answer their prayers

Yvonne Jones

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Something That Makes Me Happy

The thing that makes me happy the most is when my daughter Lisa does well in school. It really makes me feel proud to know that she is performing so well. When she started pre-kindergarten in September '88, I didn't think she would be interested. But to my surprise she loves it.

Just to hear her teacher comment about her makes me feel extra proud. At times she amazes me. When she's at home and looking through books, she reads some of the words. I look at her and ask her, "How did you know what that says?" She answers, "I don't know," or "I just know." I guess that's all in recognizing basic sight words.

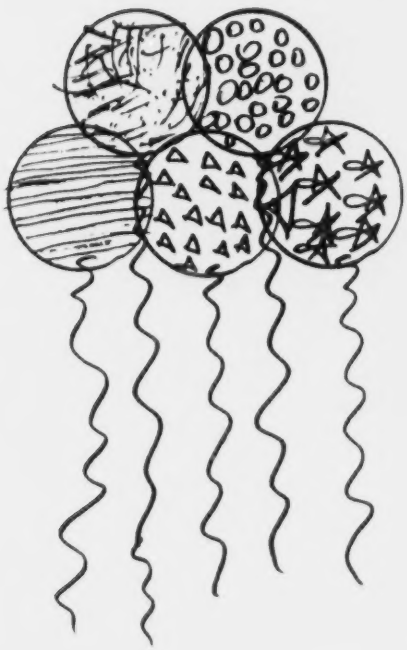
Lisa is now attending kindergarten for the gifted and talented. When I was told that she was accepted for this program, I was overwhelmed. I didn't know what to do, say or think. I was so happy to know that someone recognized her for being gifted and talented.

Lisa's last year teacher advised me to transfer her to another school with the same program. She thought it might be better equipped, but for my convenience, I did what was better for me. To transfer her would take me too far out of the way. So I let her stay in the school she's attending now. I hope she continues to do twice as well, no, three times as well as she is doing now.

I would really hate to see her make the same mistake I made by dropping out of school. As her mother, I will do the best to my ability to make sure she takes advantage of this opportunity.

I dedicate this to my daughter:
You may be at the bottom of the ladder
looking up, my baby, but the sky is the limit.
Go for it.

Corinne Dixon



By Yvonne Jones

22

23

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ROOTS, VIBES AND CULTURE

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1545 in the Land of Africa

It was 1545 in the land of Africa where I was born, a child of misery, to a typical African couple in the village of Simbara, 20 miles off Nigeria. We lived in a hut which was a little bigger than a modern bathroom, no place to breathe or move, but we managed anyway to survive. For fifteen years we lived very peacefully with what we had. We never knew there was such a thing as a white man, but it did exist.

It was three nights before my sixteenth birthday when my mother Sabba woke up and said to my father and I that she had a terrible dream. She was very shaky and looked very frightened; my father held her in his arms and asked her to explain the dream to him, so she started. At first the words could not come out her mouth, but then it began coming out. She said that we were out in the fields working the land and trying to dig up food for the week. All of a sudden she happened to glance at the ocean and saw something she had never seen in her life before. My father asked her what was that she saw, and my mother said that she didn't know how to describe it exactly, but she would try.

It was big, with long bamboo-like things shooting up to the sky with a few pieces of white rags hanging on the top. It also had smoke coming from the top like a smoking kettle. It was floating on the sea and coming towards us. Then I hollered and said, "Look at this!" and everyone in the field stopped working and looked toward the ocean. We all stood there and looked at the big thing while it got closer and closer. When it came about twenty feet towards the land, she said, she saw men lowering little things into the water and getting in them and heading towards us. Then we all started running because we had never seen anyone or anything like this before. They were different from us. Then she said, "I woke up from my sleep and I don't know what happened after, but I feel like something very bad will happen to us and our village." My father said to her, "It's nothing, Sabba, it's just a dream you had, nothing wrong will happen."

Two months after my sixteenth birthday, my mother's dream came true. These men that looked different from us in the big long floating thing invaded our village with weapons and killed some of our people and took the rest of us back to that big thing. When we got inside, everybody was separated from each other. They had already invaded other villages because they had hundreds of different villagers piled up upon each other in chains. It was a mess. My mother and father were separated from each other and I was also separated from them. It was like a nightmare -- it was like living in hell. I was lost in a world of life on a string with no reason. These white men spoke a different language, and the other villagers spoke different languages. I could not understand them; they could not understand me. The thought of suicide occurred to me but I did not go through with it. I was in chains from head to toe and so was everyone else. We were on that thing floating on the ocean for seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks and months in the same position. I felt I might as well be dead.

One day I was brought up on the top. I did not know for what reason. There were all these white men standing there. They were all dressed in red colored costumes, some of them with guns and some with whips. I happened to look to my right and I saw two black men hanging from the

The Invasion

"My people, this is our land and not theirs. What right do these men in armor have to take our land? They come with warships, filled with horses and war machines. Even this will not help them. We will not bend, we will stay and fight. I know this is something I must do."

"I am not running from these men. The armies of evil are almost upon us. I know some of us will flee, but how long can you run? Are you, my people, going to let these men take your land, wives, children, sisters and brothers? No! I think not; stand and fight. Come, I see them coming. Prepare yourselves for war."

"The women and children will stay in the village. The men will head towards the jungle. Move fast and attack like the warriors we are. We must not give these iron men the advantage to take our land from us. The jungle is our friend, we will use it to our advantage. They come closer, we must not run. Die like a warrior and not like a fleeing dog."

"Attack! My brothers, show no sorrow towards the evil ones. They come to take our land, they must die! Fight, they must not win. Even with their armor they are no match for us. See them, they fight and die."

" Fight you may, but you will not win. See the tin men flee. Kill! We will not give into your evil."

"The fight is over, you will never win, tin men. You fight bravely, but will not leave this land which you have invaded. We have to stop the invaders."

"The tin men have given up."

Rodney Campbell

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very top of the thing by their necks. Then I looked down into the sea and saw about ten other black men floating in the water head down. They seemed to be dead. Then I thought that I was going to get one of those treatments, so I was very nervous, but unfortunately I did not -- they had something else in mind for me. They sold me to a different white man for a barrel of whiskey. Can you believe it? So I was transferred to a smaller thing and taken to land with some other black men. When we got there I felt strange being on land again after being on water for so long.

That day we got on land these other white men were much meaner than those on the big thing. They threw myself and the other men in a house like a barn filled with straws, and it looked like this was going to be our home as long as we were alive. After a few hours some black woman was sent to bring us water and dry, stale bread to eat. I was very happy to see some food, but that food had been left over for a long time so I just drank some water. Night came and everything went quiet. Most of the men were asleep, but I wasn't. I had too many things on my mind. So all through the night I was thinking and trying to understand what I had been through and why I got through this.

Stanislaus Webster

A White Man in My Village

The first things that came to my mind were curiosity and skepticism because I did not know where he came from or what he was going to do. For that reason, I kept very far from him; however, he did not keep away from me. He kept staring at me, like a man staring at a beautiful horse. Then it happened. All the villagers started to gather around him. Then he was scared to death and pulled out his thunderstick. I did not know what that thing was, looking like a stick. The villagers kept surrounding him, then boom, the noisestick went off and the villagers were scared as anyone could be. They ran and hid anywhere they could not be found. I was so scared that I did not know what to do.

Anthony Johnson

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You are a young mother, and the slave owner is going to sell your child away:

The thing I would try is to reason with him, telling him I would do anything and everything to keep her or him here with me. Suppose that didn't work out. I would tell him all the advantages that this child would have for him. For example, I would tell my master, "You need to keep some young ones around to keep the land rich and to pick the cotton fast, and to make your plantation stronger than ever." And I would really get it into his head to see all the money he could be making. And if that didn't work out, then I would leave with my young'n and never return, and if he caught me, I would tell him, "Before you take mine you will have to go through me, and I'll be damned if that's going to be easy."

Wanda Gilliam

First of all, I would try to leave town with my baby or hide him somewhere with family members to keep the slave owner from getting him. If I couldn't get my baby away so the slave owner wouldn't get him, I would put up a big fight before I gave up my child. The slave owners would have to kill me and all my family before they took my child. And I would have told them they don't have any rights to come and take away my baby because he does not belong to them. I would ask them how they would feel if someone tried to sell their child. And if they still didn't understand, they would have to kill me and all my family before they took away my baby.

Paulette Ravenell

A Rebellion Against Slavery

If a friend of mine comes to me in the middle of the night and asks me to join a rebellion, a fight against slavery, I will do it because slavery is a terrible thing to have in the world. Many people in my land will be uncomfortable doing things that they don't like to do. I know that my people know a lot of things and are intelligent, they don't need this kind of thing to happen to them. Some know how to work in mining or grow food.

The white people who are in my land take too much advantage of my people. I don't like to see little children carry the white people's things on their backs or pull wagons. Children are to be in their homes or doing something else, but not these things. Men are strong enough for this, but not children. Women could cook and wash clothes or do something else. White people can't understand this; they love to use us.

The thing I will try to do is stop the white people from going over us like animals. We're not any kind of animal to be pushed around in our land. And we will tell the white people that we are intelligent and know how to use things in our land. We know how to make things like wagons, weapons, etc. I say that rebellion is a good thing to have.

Jose Roman

Captured

While gathering herbs for my sick child's medicine, I was seized by ivory colored men. Their hair like fur and eyes the colors of things natural and familiar, that held a demon with which I was to get familiar.

I had never seen such men in my land. I fought, I tried to escape their clutches, to run and warn my people of invasion.

They beat me, these men of alabaster, and bound me in heavy metal. I was brought to the water, where I saw a great boat larger than anything I had ever seen.

There was a ramp which helped many others to be herded onto the ship. I did not see my son, nor my mother, or my husband (who couldn't protect me now), or anyone familiar. And onto the great dark ship I too was herded. I was bound to a small area which would be my home for what would seem like eternity.

Men, women and children were packed so tightly together, it would be impossible for one to scratch if he had the desire.

I tried to communicate to my fellow captives, and realized that it was verbally impossible, and circumstantially irrelevant.

We did not need words. Fear, outrage and pain, suffering, dying and hopelessness need no interpretation.

The stench of death and foul odors of broken pride need not be explained. Those who could, if they wanted to, communicate verbally with someone else, didn't. Only to God.

I did not need a medium to hear the constant desperate pleas for death, nor to see the living dead, or the dead living.

April Mojica

One Room

ONE ROOM -- it is like a small matchbox, especially when six or seven of us are living in there, me, my two brothers, my sisters, my mother and my stepfather. I never knew my real father. My mother told me he died in a car accident when I was three years old.

I am much bigger now, fourteen to be exact. My brothers and sisters are older than me. Yes, I am the youngest, at least I thought I was until our mother told us she's expecting a baby .

It is hard living in one room separated from your mother and sisters by only a curtain. And when our stepfather was living with us, there was another curtain. None of us never got much schooling. We were kicked out either for stealing or fighting because somebody called us One-Room. My two sisters don't realize it, but they have slowly become prostitutes. My bigger brother is in jail now. He came home one day and saw our stepfather beatin' on my mother. My brother picked up a board and broke my stepfather's two hands.

Life has gotten hard for us now that my step father has gone. He was the only one with a job. The little money my sisters bring from the street is not enough. Sometimes they come in with more cuts and bruises than money from being raped by their customers. I used to work in a supermarket, but the $2.50 an hour is not enough now that my little baby sister is born, so now I am back in my old school selling drugs.

Christopher Wilson

Jamaica

Jamaica is a tropical island where the people are well acquainted with reggae music and various songs. It's also the place where out of many we are one. That's what makes us such a strong nation.

Our forefathers who were African went through a lot of tribulation because of the slave trade and the white man. We were taken away from our original land given to us by the almighty one.

Jamaica, the reggae island, was built by African hands. Marcus Garvey is our greatest inspiration. Then comes Bob Marley with reggae music that rocks nation upon nation. Now is the time for us to live as one. That is the truth of the matter. We have no other plan but to save the situation we now have on our hands.

Denval Dwyer

Black Power

The 1980s were the best of times and the worst of times for black business. So it makes sense to look back at both the progress and pitfalls of the 1980s and forward to opportunities in the 1990s. Near the decade's beginning in 1982, the U.S. Bureau of the Census counted 339,239 black businesses. They were 40% of all minority-owned business, but only 25% of all U.S. businesses. However, black business increased nearly 47% between 1977 and 1982, while the total number of business grew only 14%.

Studies conducted by the Washington, D.C. based Joint Center for Political Studies reveal both good and bad news. First the bad news: on the whole, black businesses trailed Hispanic and Asian businesses in sales volume and receipts. The majority of black businesses were concentrated in the personal services and retail trade industries and had average annual receipts of less than $5,000 in 1982.

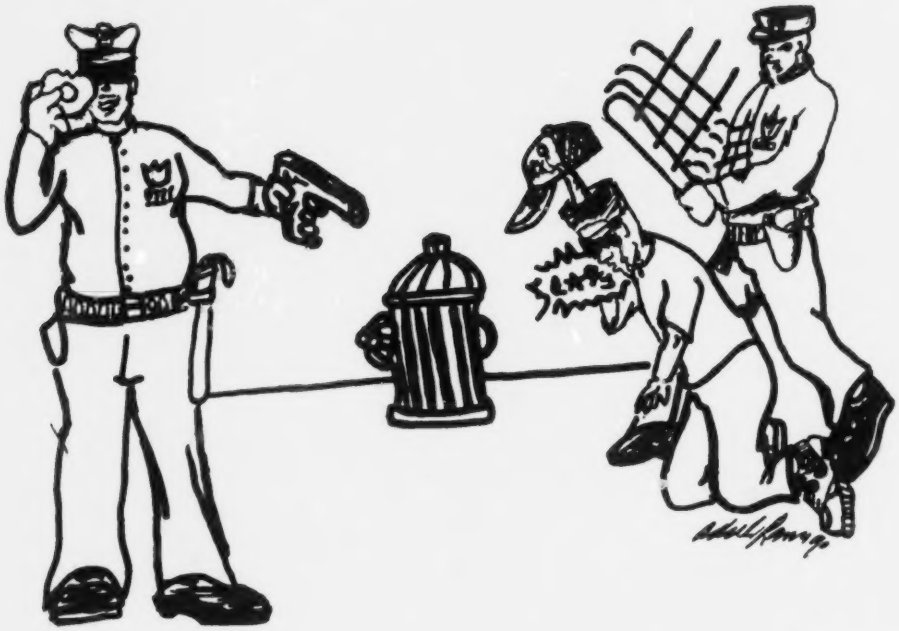
Now the good news: a substantial number of black companies were in emerging industries. The blacks who headed these firms were more highly educated than self-employed blacks in earlier years and more likely to have gained at least some of their experience working in large, mainstream businesses. As a result, more blacks entered into finance, wholesaling, manufacturing and professional services. In addition, when compared with nonblack firms of similar age, size, and capital investment, black firms had similar survival rates between 1982 and 1986.

When black companies focus on the black consumer market, their fortunes wax and wane with the employment prospects of black workers. As black firms have moved into the mainstream economy (and to the extent to which they continue to do so), their prospects are increasingly tied to it. This is clearly reflected in both the statistics on black firms in general and in the profile of the economic perspective.

The economic outlook for the next decade as reported by the Bureau of Labor statistics indicates that black firms are moving in the right direction. The industries which black entrepreneurs have entered are expected to grow faster than the overall economy. These include durable manufacturing, capital equipment, computers and other office equipment, and the chemical industry.

The food and catering industries will also expand due to increased contracting by schools, hospitals and other institutions. Likewise, the growth in temporary help agencies, computer and data processing services, and outside research and management firms has caused the business services industry to expand briskly.

Keith Bullock



Free Africa

If my friend came to me in the middle of the night to ask me to join a fight for freedom, I would fight for my brothers and sisters in Africa, and my whole family. I will fight to the death and I will fight with my heart and soul. I will pick up the gun and shoot and shoot until I cannnot stand. And I will be very happy that my African brothers and sisters and me are free. And if the white man comes again, I will fight again.

Gamal Wright

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What's Going On?

Police brutality is becoming a serious issue to discuss. It's a vicious crime because we expect the police to protect us, not harm us. During the summer I witnessed an act of police brutality; about seven of us were sitting on a car in front of our building. When we heard gunshots we all ran to the corner; the man who fired the shots ran past us with the gun in his hand. We all walked back to the car and we were laughing and joking with each other when a cop car pulled up, grabbed a guy who lives in my building, threw him against the car and said he was under arrest for firing the shots, and he said, "I didn't have a gun, I didn't fire any gunshots." During that time everybody is screaming, "you have the wrong person because he's been sitting here for hours."

The white cop grabbed him by the collar and ripped his shirt. When he pulled back, the other white cop hit him in the head with his nightstick and the guy fell to the ground. As he got up they hit him again and again, the third or fourth hit bust his head open. As his sisters went to help him, they pushed the oldest one away, she walked back over to help him because they were kicking him and stepping on his neck. As his sister went over there, one of the cops punched her in her face and arrested her for obstructing justice.

In the meantime, everybody was screaming. His nieces and nephews were crying saying "help my uncle" and "stop those bad cops". A lady that lives in my building called the cops, more officers came. The lieutenant was black. He took our names down and the two cops' names down, come to find out those were the same two cops who beat up three black kids two blocks away from me. They're still in court with the case. Also during the fight the sister made one smart move. She grabbed the officer's shirt (the one who hit her brother in the head); when she did that his name badge came off. They also refused him medical attention but later on about three a.m they took him to get his head stitched up. It all happened at ten o'clock. It was disgraceful.

STATEMENT: I've noticed that charges against police brutality are on the rise. We must do something about this because most of the brutality is being done on the black race.

Charisse Matos

Father

I see you "Sir"
your large black
work calloused hands
standing tall
in gentle pride
ever constant
in your quiet strength
a kind word
a caring smile
determination written
in every character line
of your African face
your faith in love
underlines your every action
you hold us
your children close
in your strong will
you're my father
you are my teacher
you have instilled
through your love
my strength
my African pride

Sharon Smith

My Mother

My mother is the most important person in my life. She is very dear to me. She is also a very nice person. When she hugs you, you get a warm feeling inside. Her hands are warm like a panda bear's. She always has a smile on her face unless she is angry. She doesn't get angry with me very often but when she does I feel as if my world is clouded over with gray skies and darkness. When I make her happy, I feel as if my world is filled with sunshine and flowers on a sunny summer day.

I have loved her all my life, but I realized how much when my grandmother died. My mother didn't get along too well with her sometimes, but she loved her very much. When she died, my mother was very sad. I saw my mother cry for the first time. I wished I could do something to make the pain go away, but I couldn't. All I could do was sit with her with my arms around her and cry and tell her it wouldn't hurt so much one day. My grandmother's death made me realize just how much my mother means to me. When my parents divorced, my mother became my mother, friend, and father. She has always been there for me. Always encouraging me to do my best. I love her very much. Not because of what she did or does for me, but because she is a very special person, with a bottomless heart, filled with love.

Carol A. Mosley

I Want To Speak For

I want to speak for Norman F. Seeley. He said, "All I ever wanted for all my children is to come out on top, be the best they can be, know the right from the wrong, the real from the unreal. I used to chastise Tracy the most, for I want her to fulfill her dreams and get everything she wants in her lifetime."

This was a man who would do things to me and give no reasons why. When I was about sixteen, I used to babysit for my nephew. One day he was sitting on the bed. I was not too far away, yet my head was out of the window. As soon as I stuck my head in, slap! with no explanation from my stepfather.

When my child was born, that day I realized (Do you?) Tracy Johnson is a better person and I'm glad of who I am. I am so glad Norman F. Seeley came into my life. Most importantly, I am glad I had the chance to tell him thanks and I love you. To let all the people know that even when life ends, it has its beginning.

Tracy Johnson

Cabby

7 cab drivers slain. Shot in the head
all of them dead.

What does it mean to me?
I must fear Life, Death, Humanity.

Their Cold, Decaying bodies found on the
avenues of the rotting. Infested and Ignored.

Their warmth missed by their lovers
Their warmth gone forever consumed
by unseeing eyes of greed.

Their light lost from their children
Their light lost.

The city tenses, while the gray concrete ground
opens for the remains of . . .

Trust, Justice, Hope, Peace, Health, and the 7 slain cab drivers.

April Mojica

My Community

The problem in my community is CRACK. On every corner there is a crackhead and a dealer. The crackheads and dealers start from the age of fifteen. Drugs destroy the community because there are always shootouts and innocent bystanders are getting killed or hurt. They go around stealing and mugging people. You can't walk down the street without looking around. It's not safe to send your children out to play because a crackhead or dealer might eat up their minds and your child could end up selling and using crack. The dealers don't care who you are or how old you are. They sell it to you anyway just to make money. It is a damn shame to live in a community that is infested with crack.

I know a guy who is 21 years old, and this guy is the sweetest guy you could ever meet, but when he needs his crack he steals from his mother, sister, brothers and anybody else who has something of value that he could sell. When he first came to the community he was not like that, but then he started hanging out with the wrong people and he started using marijuana, then beer, then cocaine, until he was introduced to crack. Then it was a totally different thing; he would stay out in the street for days without eating, just stealing and looking for money to buy crack. At this moment he is still on crack. Whenever he wants to he stays home for two months without smoking any crack. But the minute he steps out the door he goes back to smoking crack. When he sees the environment that he lives in he says to himself, "Fuck it! I'm going to get me some crack." All he has to do is go across the street or even to his building on the third floor and he will get the crack. Right now he has decided that he is going into a program for 27 months that his parole officer suggested. I have asked him why he smokes crack. He told me, "I started smoking crack when I was sixteen years old. My brother was smoking it and I asked him what it was and he told me. He wanted me to try it and I told him no, but then I got curious and decided to try it. At first I didn't like it, but then I kept trying until I got the hang of it. I started asking people for money and stealing anything of value that I could find so that I could buy some crack."

I asked him, "How does it make you feel and why do you do it?" He told me, "It makes me feel like I'm walking on air and I do it so that I can forget about my problems. I sometimes feel so confused, like I don't know whether I'm coming or going. I need someone that will make me feel good. Someone that could help me the way I want to be helped. The way I want to be helped is by someone talking to me, not screaming at me like my family does, trying to understand me, treating me like a human being, not like a crackhead."

I also know a nineteen year-old girl who used to be a dealer and a user. Her name is Fashley. She is the prettiest girl in the neighborhood. She has tan skin, with the most beautiful, long and curly auburn hair and the most beautiful hazel eyes you could ever imagine. Fashley has a daughter who is one-year-old and her name is Stephanie. She lives with her daughter in a beautiful apartment that she decorated herself. I asked her, how did she ever get started on this shit? She told me, "When I was fourteen my mother threw me out. I lived in the street for a month. I met a guy named Danny who was real nice. He told me that if I would sell some crack for him I could get enough money for my own apartment and I wouldn't have to live in the street. For like two months I stayed at his house with his brother and him. Then I had enough money for my own place, so I was able to get an apartment. I went back to school. By then I was already fifteen, and after school I would go and sell crack from four in the afternoon to eleven at night. I was making $200 dollars a day, so every night I would come home with that much money. One day me and Danny decided to get drunk together. We did, but he also asked me to try some crack. I told him no. He said fine, but then I got curious and asked him to give me some, and he said, "Fine!" For a whole month we smoked

crack together and then I got pregnant when I was sixteen, and I couldn't smoke anymore. Danny told me,"You don't have to work anymore. I will take care of you and the baby!" I told him,"No!" I dropped out of school and worked from eight in the morning to twelve at night. When Stephanie was born I decided to take my GED. I would work during the day and then at night I would go to night school. While I was working, Danny would take care of her, and while I was in school, my neighbor would take care of her. I was lucky to have it this easy. I mean my daughter has never gone hungry because me and Danny are always and will always be there for her. She has enough dresses to dress up all the little girls in the block. Things were changing because I noticed that me and Danny were getting hooked on crack. One time I woke up in the middle of the night and told Danny that we had to stop this before it was too late. At first it was hard for both of us, but we finally did it. I am now a head teller in Citibank in Manhattan and Danny is a janitor in The World Trade Center. He is making $12.50 an hour and I am making $10.00 an hour. Even though we are not making as much money as before, we have legal jobs and a very good salary. We still live well, dress well, our daughter has everything, and we don't have to be running or hiding from the cops.

No one really knows how crack got into the community. The people of the community are the ones to blame, because when it first came into the community no one put a stop to it. They were too scared, but they weren't thinking about how the neighborhood would be a couple of years later. It can be prevented, but nobody wants to do anything about it.

The one place that says what my community is about is the corner of 141st Street and Beekman Avenue. When you pass by you see a whole bunch of teenagers saying "redtop or yellow-top" which means those are the kinds of crack that they've got to sell. When they see the cops they say, "five-o five-o!" and everybody starts moving or they act like nothing. Across the street, down the block, there is another crack spot which is run by Spanish-speaking people in the winter, and in the summer the teenagers run it. When the Spanish-speaking people see the cops they say, "BAJANDO-BAJANDO," meaning that the cops are coming down the block. In each building of Beekman Avenue there is a crack spot. In my building, it's on the second floor. There is always a crack spot in the building somewhere. The only places that they don't sell crack are the candystore and the store across the street, but in the store on my side of the street, they sell crack right in front of the store. The reason why they sell there is because that store is open 24 hours a day, and crack-heads come at all times to buy cigarettes, so that is the perfect place for the drug dealers to make money.

I feel that the only way crack could be taken out of the community is if the people of the community go down to the precinct and file a complaint and ask to have police officers patrolling the area 24 hours a day. If going to the precinct doesn't work, then they should go to the court or write a letter to the mayor or governor and have everyone sign it so the mayor and governor could know what's going on in our community. People can't escape the drugs, but they can keep it from coming into their community.

Iovani DeJesus

We All Know

We all know who's the President, where's his residence and how excellent his paycheck is.

We all know about crack, that it's wack and that an addict will sell the shirt off his back for a hit.

We all know that Bush knows crack, but he isn't doing jack but raising the tax while his pockets get fat.

We all know the news is like the blues and how a brother robbed another for a pair of Bally shoes.

We all know cops who try and stop the madness but get popped so they walk the streets with their guns cocked.

We all know dealers who make stealers of mothers who are fiending but can't do nothing cause their house is like a ceiling -- bare.

We all know the mayor who is just a player to a gov't which is greater so the mayor must do what they say.

We all know the city, some feel joy, others pity, for our neighborhoods that look shitty.

We all know that our block will stay the same and that crack will remain, that it's a shame but who's to blame.

Do you know?

Adali Ramos

Black Moon Rising

The time will come
When everyone's equal:
Yes, to the book of slavery
There is no sequel.
The time will come
When the minor becomes major
Without being harassed
Blacks can wear pagers.
The time will come
When we will be leaders with knowledge
Where it becomes easier
To get into college
The time will come
When our children will become lawyers and doctors
Instead of shedding tears
Because they are locked up.
When the time comes
To the others it's surprising
But to us --
It's the ***BLACK MOON RISING!!!***

Tony Davis

YALA STUDENTS

"Drugs were pushed upon us to substitute for involvement in an educational system that doesn't work."

Robert Griffith

"I feel that young teenage mothers should not drop out of school just because they are pregnant. First of all, if you do not get an education, you will have no skills or experience in anything.

I feel teenage mothers should be forced in some way to go to school. As far as welfare, they should not be able to receive welfare if they are not attending school. I think that it's just laziness coming from teenage mothers.

If I can do it, so can they. It will be rough in the beginning, but you will get the hang of it. I did, and I feel proud to have supported my son on my own without the help from welfare."

Jackeline Gonzalez

"On last night's news I watched the story about Yusef Hawkins and about his mother learning to cope with her son's death, and as I watched this I tried to figure out why he died. It had to deal with the fact that his color was a different tone. Then I thought to myself -- was I prejudiced? -- and somehow I think I am in a way, but what shocks me about it is that I was not brought up that way! I ask you this -- do you think somehow you are prejudiced?"

David Moore

"I feel scared and lonely because I don't know where I'm going, to hell or heaven. I think about leaving my family and friends behind, and how they cared for me. I would be sad, in darkness, my eyes would be weary and watery, with tears dripping down my cheeks. What would I do? I don't know. Where would I die, in bed or on the street? It would be awful just being in that state."

Denise Walker

"The European (white) does not want it to be known that the Black man was so far ahead of him in science. For example, it wasn't Columbus that discovered the earth was round; many think that the Egyptian people had long before discovered this.

Africa had colleges and universities. People came from as far away as the Asian continent to be educated in Africa."

Marten Salandy

SPEAK OUT

"Moral values are the main ingredients that make up my personality. My morals keep me in check and guide me towards making the right decision. Without my morals I would not be the person that I am today. There are many different values that I hold close to my heart. My morals are to never get into drugs, to never get into prostitution, to never give up on my dreams, to stay with one man, and to fight for justice, no matter what the odds are. Always remember if there's a will there's a way."

Linda Rivera

"If you drop out of school you are making a big mistake.

I want this G.E.D. very bad. I feel it is a step in the right direction in providing a better life for my son and if I don't get my G.E.D. out of this program, I will get into another program until I can get the G.E.D. I feel if I don't get my G.E.D., I am letting myself down and also my son, and I don't want to let him down in any way, because I LOVE HIM!"

Sheila Cousar

"I feel that child abuse is a crying shame. To bring a child in this world and take him out like that, you need to be shot (DEAD).

Just think, after you held on to that child for nine months and went through the pain to bring him in this world, for some stupid reason or maybe no reason at all you want to kill him. Do me a favor, STOP - THINK and CHILL, and remember he's a part of you. It's your baby."

Lottice Roulhac

"I think that with the oppression that blacks are facing in America, all black youths should strive to get a good education. With a good education, we can see the world differently, have a better understanding of things and develop strong character.

Education can give us the qualifications that will make us eligible for the good jobs that are being secured by whites, give us a chance to contribute effectively to our community, and create opportunities that will pave the way for other blacks to secure a solid future."

Lloyd Daniels

"Get a life! Stop being like everyone and learn to be yourself. Yes, I know life is hard out there, that's true, but you're the one who has to predict the future. So you tell me, are you going to become a somebody, or a nobody? It's up to you. To be or not to be, that is the question!"

Debra Henderson

The Right to an Abortion

Abortion is a big problem in America today, a problem that we all need to talk about. I feel that no one has the right to tell anyone else what to do with their bodies. If a women was raped and became pregnant, she should have the right to make her own decision whether she wants to have the abortion or not.

I know a few young girls that had abortions, and because they had that abortion, some of them finished high school and now are doing better for themselves. I wonder, if abortion was illegal, what would they have done? Just think about this; what if a fifteen, fourteen, or even an eleven-year-old child was to get pregnant, and the Constitution was changed -- that means that the girl does not have the right to have an abortion.

Sometimes people do not have the answers to all our questions of today. I don't know if abortion means the same to you as it means to me. All I know is, if I were a woman and I had a deformed baby or I couldn't take care of it, I would get an abortion.

What I'm really trying to say is that there are so many reasons why women should have the right to make their own decisions whether to have the abortion or not. I believe if the Constitution was changed, and abortion was illegal, that women would wind up going to an uncertified doctor like Dr. Jekyll- Mr. Hyde to have what the Right-to-Life movement wants to take from them, the right to choose what to do with their own bodies.

Andrew Bell

SECRETS AND EMOTIONS

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Secrets

There are secrets folks don't even tell themselves.

Lonely secrets,
secrets of an unborn child
that you wanted to mean well.
Secrets of desire
for someone like yourself,
which result in deeper secrets
you can't share with someone else . . .

At times I wish I could just scream! ! !
And stop time

A scary, horrible, wicked scream.

The scream of bondage,
scream out all the agony of being born
in a world where no one,
or nothing is FREE! ! !

From the moment we are born,
we are taught against our natural instincts,
which are to love
and to be who we are.

Our minds are poisoned
so young
it is cruel.

We are first taught
the limits of what they think we can do
which is nothing.

Then we must learn
hatred and prejudice.

And then we must go through life
hating everyone,
judging everyone,
including our despicable selves.

And our secrets.

And I'd tell the whole world
that it's o.k.

Let's just free ourselves.

And tell our secrets.

April Mojica

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Afraid of

I'm afraid of reaching
and not grabbing.
Afraid of failing
instead of succeeding.
I'm very afraid of loneliness and pain.
Afraid to love
and not be loved,
to hurt
and
get hurt.
Afraid to laugh
when I really want to cry,
to walk
when I want to run.
I'm afraid to be a prisoner
when I want to be free.
Afraid to conceive
because it might not live.

Rosa Figueroa

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Scandalous

Scandalous
Are the thoughts
that race
through my mind when it comes to you.
The things that I say
when lying next to you.
The way I feel
when I look into your eyes.
Scandalous
Is the way I feel when we make love
the thoughts and dreams that come to
mind, the clouds I ride on as we set
aside the world and ride free.
For Scandalous
is the only word to describe
You to me.

Latiefa (Alicia Tanks)

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry to neglect your self-respect
But what I did you could not accept
and the result I did not expect.

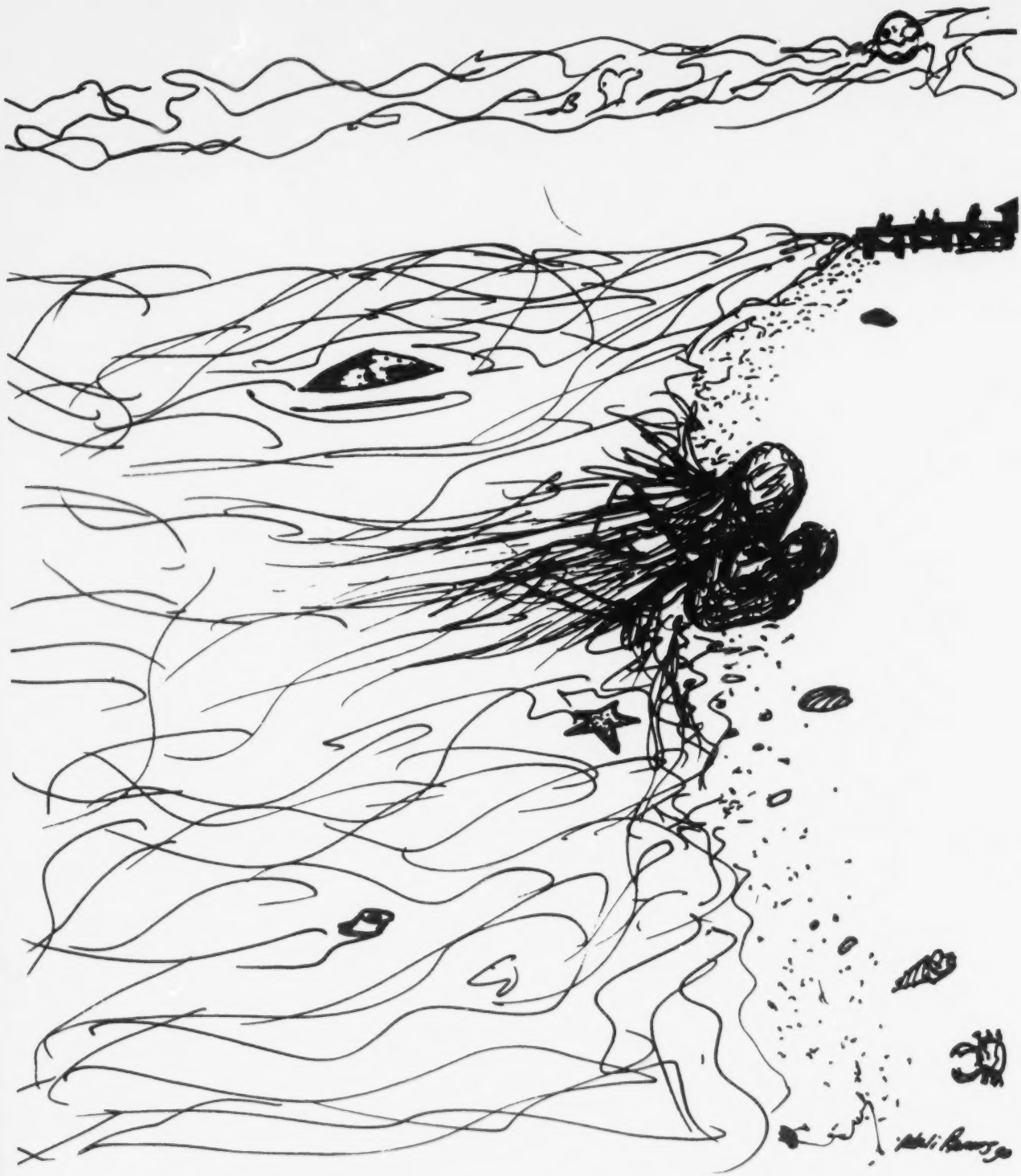
I'm sorry to have lied but many nights I have tried
to show emotions that I hide all these feelings I denied
In the end you cried and my heart died.

I'm sorry to have crushed your self-esteem
Your essence was present in all of my pleasant dreams
I'd like to redeem myself for what I did is too extreme

I'm sorry for I have cheated. I was horny I should've beat it
but the lust was strong and so deceiving my love was defeated
For our relationship Armageddon I've completed.

I'm sorry to pass up all your charm, all your class
Plain and simple I'm just a sorry ass!

Adali Ramos



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Sex on the Beach

The water rushes up and beats me
it strokes me
it caresses me
it loves me like no one else does.

It is so very gentle
it treats me so special,
it loves me and it's with me all the time.

It cools me off when I am hot and steamy.
When I am around it, it's a totally different desire.
It keeps me wet and enticed.

I am innocent before this,
but after, I am wanting it even more.
It's just a craving
an urge
a pleasant desire
that has me moist

I'm hot
and sizzling
and burning with the heat
I turn over
and I feel the darkness
and the enjoyment of cold breezes
crawling in my mind
and reading all my powers of pain.
Its deep riding body
covers me with a loneliness
a feeling of being alone.
And then it all came to an end.

Luz Carrion

The First Move

CHARACTERS:

1st	*2nd*
Shawn Robinson	*Michelle White*

He's a cool kind of guy who likes girls but doesn't know how to talk to them because of his background. His family is one of those that kept him in the house all day and all night after school, and he had not many friends. His financially established family was against the neighborhood children and all the other kids and people around them in the whole area. He wanted to be like the other guys and hang out and talk to girls, but he couldn't because of his parents. "Finish your education first, then hang out son," his father always said. "You don't need a girlfriend until you finish high school," his mother always would reply when he talked about girls. The real point is he is a virgin not only to himself but to life overall. Needs to get out and see the world his way.

Michelle is one of those girls who likes to stay out and party, not to the point where there's drugs involved but just getting high on life. She herself is very self confident and an easy going person to get along with, very friendly and open-minded. You can say a nice person to talk to. She's waiting for that certain someone special to fill the gap, not between her legs but in her life where she doesn't have to hope and meet at a party. Cannot seem to find the right guy to go steady with or really care about.

DIALOGUE:

Two characters meet in a school lunchroom but Shawn is afraid to talk to her and she likes him but feels he should come on to her or make the first move. At the same time other characters, probably bad guys, are always messing things up for him, calling him names, throwing empty milk containers and things like that.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

SETTING *(At home)*

Father: *How was school today son?*

Shawn: *Fine, the same old back breaking books.*

Father: *Just keep it that way or the books won't be the only thing breaking your back!*

Shawn: *Mom, can I have some money to go to the movies with the guys down the block?*

Father: *I've been waiting for you to ask that for a long time, your mother and I discussed this earlier. We feel you should get a job part time so you don't slack up in school, ok?*

Shawn: *I probably would of had one if y'all didn't spoil me so early in my life, now I don't want to work for money but I know I should.*

Father: *I told you, Martha, that boy has all my qualities, strong in the mind and soul, and that is why he can't go to the movies with those low lifes down the block.*

Shawn: *Why do you always criticize the little bit of friends I have? They're not so bad anyway.*

Father: *I don't care what they are, you're still not going! If anywhere, upstairs and read those back breaking books.*

Narrator: *(Shawn runs upstairs wondering why he can't go, mumbling under his breath. He looks out the window and his eyes nearly explode looking out at that beautiful girl who he always sees in school. He opens the window.)*

Shawn: *Hi, um, um, uhh . . .*

Michelle: *Michelle, don't you remember?*

Shawn: *Yeah, but I didn't want to say the wrong name, you know.*

Michelle: *Can you come outside and talk?*

Narrator: *(Shawn looks to see what time it is and the window slams down on his fingers, all of them. He yanks them out and never comes back to the window.)*

(End of scene)

ACT 1 SCENE 2

SETTING *(School Lunchroom, sitting in the corner eating all alone. Michelle walks through.)*

Shawn: *Hi, Michelle!"*

Michelle: *Hi, do you mind if I join you?*

Shawn: *I'm sorry about yesterday, I was going to come outside but I had to do something. (Bandage up his fingers.)*

Michelle: *I was wondering what happened when I saw the window close. I thought you were coming out but you took so long I left.*

Stupid Person: *Hey, Michelle! What are you talking to him for, he's a nerd. Yeah, ask him why his fingers are bandaged up, we know why! Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!*

Narrator: *Shawn puts his head down for a minute and then runs out of the lunchroom. The bell rings for class and he still hasn't returned. Michelle sees his books so she lugs them along with her as she hunts through the school looking for him.*

ACT 2 SCENE 1

SETTING *(It's outside in the schoolyard and everyone's gone home.)*

Michelle: *Hi flat !eaver!*

Shawn: *I'm sorry for running out on you like that but those guys are assholes, they need their asses whipped with bobwire!*

Michelle: *Don't let them get to you, they're just trying to impress me.*

Shawn: *So am I and I always seem to mess up somewhere along the line. I can't seem to get what I want.*

Michelle: *And what do you really want?*

Shawn: *I want you, I want to go out with you to the movies and a restaurant.*

Michelle: *Well, why didn't you ask me?*

Shawn: *I was afraid you'd say no or turn me away like all the other good looking girls I know.*

Narrator: *(Michelle is flattered by his words and grabs his hand, the one not bandaged.)*

Michelle: *I'd love to go out with you. Is this weekend ok.?*

Shawn: *Sure! I'll pick you up around 8:00!*

Michelle: *Well, I guess we have a date, see you later. (He jumps with joy, but he suddenly realizes he has no way of comunicating with her.)*

ACT 2 SCENE 2

SETTING *(Shawn is home with his face in the phone book.)*

Father: *How was your day, son?*

Shawn: *".....#!$*!....."*

Father: *Shawn!*

Shawn: *Oh, hi dad, is mom home yet?*

Father: *No, but what are you doing?*

Shawn:*Trying to find a name and a number.*

Father: *No kidding! Did you do your homework?*

Shawn: *Not yet, I'm doing something.*

Father: *Do your homework first, now!*

Shawn: *Sure, dad.*

Narrator: *(Shawn goes upstairs with his books and an attitude. He's upset thinking about Michelle.)*

Father: *Shawn, come down here, there's someone here to see you. (He runs downstairs.)*

Shawn: *Hi Michelle, I was just. . .*

Michelle: *I know, here's everything you need (Gives him directions to up the block!)*

Shawn: *I'm glad you stopped by, thanks, see you later.*

Father: *Who's that? And what did she give you?*

Shawn: *She's my date and these are directions.*

Father: *Directions to trouble, isn't it?*

Shawn: *No, I'm taking her out. I wish you'd stop treating me like I'm 5 years old.*

Father: *I'm just being careful, ok. It's a big world out there and I want you to be ready for it.*

Shawn: *Don't worry dad, I already am. (Thinking about Michelle)*

Kevin Snuggs

Real

Real
Here we are fighting off what we feel
realizing what there is, is all so real.
You want me like I want you; for you to
admit is so hard to do.
I look in your eyes, I see love that should be mine
but you turn me away, so cruel and unkind.
Let me be there for you
to understand you,
to love you,
to care for you,
like a true woman should do.
No, you pull away from me
want me to explore, be free.
Let me give you the love a man deserves.
To you I want to say those three words.
Don't turn me away
just let me stay.
Look in my eyes and see what I feel
They say the eyes show
what is real.

Meritza Garcia

Don't Get Close

Don't get close.
You might make me pause,
Interrupt my pose;
If you want to stay
To watch, you may,
But don't contrive
To get inside,
Inside my world where conscience hides.
You'll break the chain
That holds out pain.
You can stand aside
And watch my act,
But, stay outside;
If you want to love,
Please, go away;
There is no room for love inside.
Inside my world, there's only pride
And walls to keep the pain outside;
If you want to watch, you may,
But you'll have to keep your love away.
Stand back a bit,
Just close enough to see and hear,
But not quite close enough to feel
The life inside, the soul that's real;
Stand back and watch,
But don't annoy;
My beauty's here to be enjoyed,
But not too much;
I can't be touched;
Your life is built on chance and hope,
But I prefer to stay remote
From all the insecurity
outside the wall that shelters me;
Just don't get close
And you can stay,
But keep your love and pain away.

Meritza Garcia

It was the month of March. The year was 1988.

Dear Andy,

I'm going to write you, but don't tell nobody. I'm trusting you with this. No one knows except my best friend from Junior High.

I think I can trust you with this. When I was 11 years old I had a baby girl. I named her Melissa. She lives with her father in Panama. That's the reason I want to go to Panama so badly. He had told me that I could see her for X-mas. I wanted to tell my mother, but I was scared. The only reason he has Melissa is because if I had told my mother she would have made me have an abortion. I can't handle that. I don't believe in that. I can't wait any longer. I only saw her for a month, after I had her. Then he left with my baby. She is 4 1/2 years old. Her birthday is June 15, on my boyfriend's birthday. Andy, that's why I have to go with you to PANAMA.

P.S. I am glad we're friends.

Yours truly,
Melissa

by Yesenia Steven

What is Love

What is love, some say it's like a crime,
but things like that I don't pay no mind.
Love is a word L-O-V-E,
you can love someone strong, or love them
naturally.
Love is strong and it can hurt,
if things tend to go right the relationship
will work.
to some love is true and not a lie,
it's just something in life no one can deny.
Love doesn't hurt nor fear anyone,
if you do the right thing love can be fun.
LOVE . . . . . .

Latoya C. Holland

Once

Once I loved. . .
Once I cared. . .
At one time I trusted
At one time I dared

My outside was soft
my inside was warm
my love was so trusting,
so vulnerable to harm

Was hurt once, was hurt twice
I still kept my place
but hurt and lonely feelings
were wearing on my face.

So careful I was
so careful I looked. . .
One taste of your sweetness
I knew I was hooked.

We experienced passion
we experienced pain
we tried to be friends
with so much to gain.

But after all this
we couldn't be friends
there wasn't the trust
it came to an end.

So now as I write
I feel for your trust
and the warm loving friendship
never shared between us . . .

Sandy J. Morris

Thoughts

Five A.M. and I'm just waking up
Hoping to feel your body next to mine
But damn I'm out of luck

The cold of the night air
Chills me to the bone

Those thoughts of you in my fantasy
Just won't leave me alone

Oh how I feel the need
To have you next to me

With those sweet thoughts
Of you in my fantasy

Making love for all eternity

Corinne Dixon

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Still Searching

As I sit and think
One thing comes to mind
It's that perfect girl
I have yet to find
My life is empty
Just school and ball
No one to be with
Not a companion at all
My ego may be bruised
But not my pride
I don't feel sorry
I just take it in stride
To have a girlfriend
Is the best feeling in the world
So I'll spend my time
Searching for my perfect girl

Tony Davis

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Ansara

Love is to be cherished and handled with care,
And if you're not careful it will soon not be there.

ANSARA

Love is not spoken and it lies within the heart,
So it says if you're not careful it will soon be apart.

ANSARA

Love means happiness and happiness is shared,
By two people who love each other, by two who really care.

ANSARA

Love means caring and caring is what you do,
When a person like me falls in love with you.

Latoya Holland

Making Up

Happy I said you make me
So just let it be
What happened was a small thing
So please forgive me
Why should I let that
Small thing upset me
When I know without you
I would be so unhappy
Our love for each other
Is all that matters
As long as we forgive and forget
Our love should last forever

Corinne Dixon

62

Every Hour, Minute, And Second

Every hour, minute, and second of the day,
I think about you.

Every hour, I wish that I could hold you
in my arms.

Every minute, I wish that the day would
move faster.

Every second, I wish I could tell you how
much I care.

When the hours go past I wish that I could
see your smiling face.

When the minutes go past, I wish that I could
hear your lovely voice.

When the seconds go past, I wish I
could tell you how much I LOVE YOU. . .

Every hour, minute, second takes so long to come.

Every hour, minute, and second of the day I want
to spend with you.

Every hour, minute, second has brought so much
to our lives.

Every hour, minute, second of my life all I want
to do is BE WITH YOU.

Sandy Morris

To Cry

To cry is
something that is natural

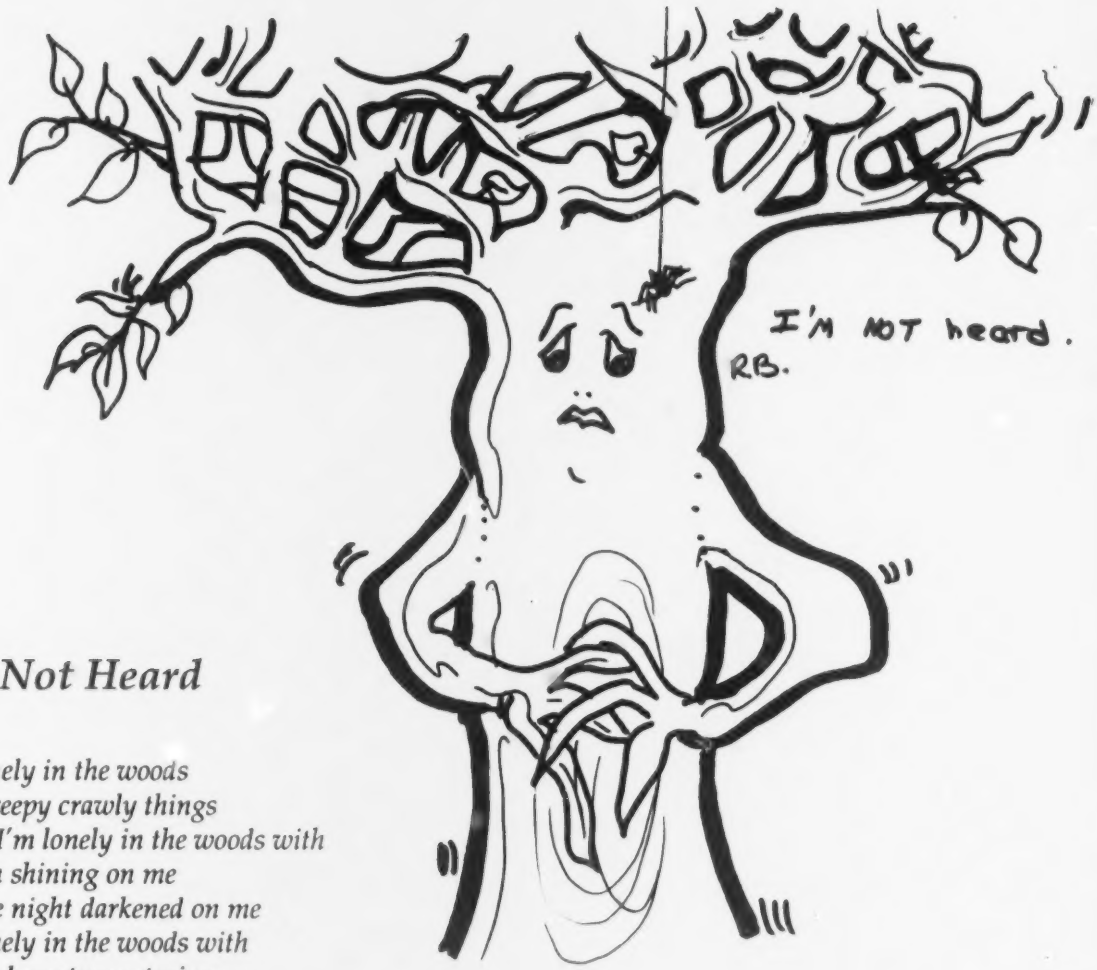
To cry is
a way to let out an emotion
such as anger, hate, love
or even when you are happy

To cry is
a way for people to express
themselves

To cry for
some people may be very hard
and for others it is very easy
Some people are more sensitive
than others and little things
will make them cry very easily

Many people hide their tears,
but they shouldn't,
because they are only expressing themselves
so let those tears feel free to roll
down your pretty face and let out
those emotions of how you feel

Tyesha Richardson



I'm Not Heard

I'm lonely in the woods
with creepy crawly things
on me I'm lonely in the woods with
the sun shining on me
and the night darkened on me
I'm lonely in the woods with
big-eyed creatures staring
and howling
I'm lonely in the woods planted
in the ground
with green plants hanging from me
and dirt under me
I'm lonely in the dark with
dangerous fires to kill me
I'm lonely in the dark
with dangerous men to chop me up
and pile me one on top of each other
I'm lonely in the dark
resting, alert, growing
no one knows why I'm not heard

Sharon Smith

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Silent Thoughts

Thoughts are like whispers
in total silence.
They're soft but heard
even in darkness.
Like light through the air
they're swift and unsporadic.
They're unheard but dangerous
like a nail in a stake.
Thoughts are like rainbows trapped
in a black hole, trying to get out.
They're astute but nobody but you
knows what they're about.
They're full of lust and envy,
jealousy and humiliation.
If you keep them to yourself for too long
they will be your destruction.
Thoughts are also filled with love and
admiration, and sometimes even fantasy.
And they are especially full of dreams.

Javone Summers

Images In My Mind

I once had an image of being alone,
no loved ones,
no friends to call my own.
It was like being trapped inside a glass ball
with no opening.
I could see through the glass
but couldn't speak to anyone
and no one could speak to me.
I felt unwanted, like an outcast
and I wondered just how long it would last.
But then again I was at peace with myself
and it wasn't all that bad,
even though I had these thoughts
of friends and loved ones I never had.
Sometimes I think to myself --
is being alone all that bad,
but I don't want to try it out
because I would lose all the
friends I ever had.

Javone Summers

Description of When People Have Left

In my room when no one's there, the T.V. just sits and collects dust. The V.C.R. just sits on the top of the T.V., happy to be accompanied by the T.V. and stereo. The stereo collects the dust, just standing there all alone, not being played, no one touching the buttons or playing with the remote. The speakers to the stereo just sit there quietly with no sound coming out, the bass making it move. The dresser with the mirrors and dresser drawers stands there with things on it feeling untouched, no one moving things around, no drawers moving in and out. The books on the shelf are just sitting on top of each other, lying there feeling lazy, collecting dust and feeling all stacked up. The bed is all made up, feeling good that no bodies are lying on it, no pressure being made on the bed, and the rugs, they're just sitting there on the floor, probably wondering and saying to themselves, "WOW, it feels good not to be stepped on." And finally the bedroom door on the inside: there's a mirror; it's saying nothing, just seeing everything in the room, saying or maybe even being glad that no human person is always standing there looking at them.

Latoya Holland

The Shadow Knows

It was 9:30 P.M. It was dark outside; only the moonlight was reflecting through the street corner. . . .

Suddenly I felt confused. My mind was wandering around. I took a walk outside, around the street corner . . . 5 minutes later, I felt as if someone was following me. I turned around, but I didn't see anyone.

The feeling got closer. It was stronger and stronger by the second. I kept walking, ignoring the feeling. Then I heard a soft voice asking me to "STOP." It was so strange. I didn't see anyone, but whatever it was, it was walking right next to me.

The Scene

ME: *Why are you following me?*

SHADOW: *Don't you know me? I'm your shadow.*

ME: *My shadow? There is no such thing. Anyway, go away. I don't feel like being bothered.*

SHADOW: *I'm here to help you. I am like your "CONSCIENCE."*

ME: *Well, if that's so, you are no help to me. You are trouble. You let me do things I don't want to do in life.*

SHADOW: *What do you mean, I am trouble? You are the one who is getting me confused. I am just a shadow. I have to follow you everywhere you go and think everything you do, so it's your fault; the fault is your confusion, not mine.*

ME: *How can you say that? You are the one who is making these things happen to me, like the way I think, the way I feel, even the things I don't want to think about. For example, I didn't want to think that I am carrying a child inside of me. So it's your fault; you did this to me.*

SHADOW: *You see, I just guide you through life . . . you've got to understand something: LIFE is what it is. Everybody is human. When you make a mistake, that is called a HUMANIZING THING . . . you blame me for your mistake, but it was your action. I am just there when you are walking in the street or anywhere in life . . . I'm there so you don't have to drop into all the holes in life. You may drop into ONE or TWO holes, but that's o.k., because I made you strong enough so you can get up and walk again in life.*

ME: *Shadow, if you are sure about making mistakes, WHY THIS CHILD? Is it a mistake or not? Please, I need to know. I feel a burning inside of me.*

SHADOW: *You've got to understand. Well, the answer to your question is NO, it is not a mistake. I would call it LIFE. You see, now I'm here because you need to be pushed, especially now that you have a double life, not only yours alone but your child, or you could call it life, a newborn life. It is not out here yet, but when it does come to this world you will thank the Lord up there. And you are going to realize that you are not only God's child, but a mother of the future.*

ME: *Shadow, I want to thank you. I've got to be honest with you. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here. I would probably be in the other world. I needed a friend and I thank you for my life, not only for mine but for my unborn child or, like you say, LIFE.*

SHADOW: *I hope you understand something -- you should thank yourself; it is you who made it and still is. I'm just your footsteps, your guide to life. Now you should be taking me home. Every human being gets tired, and we need a rest, tomorrow is another day. . . .*

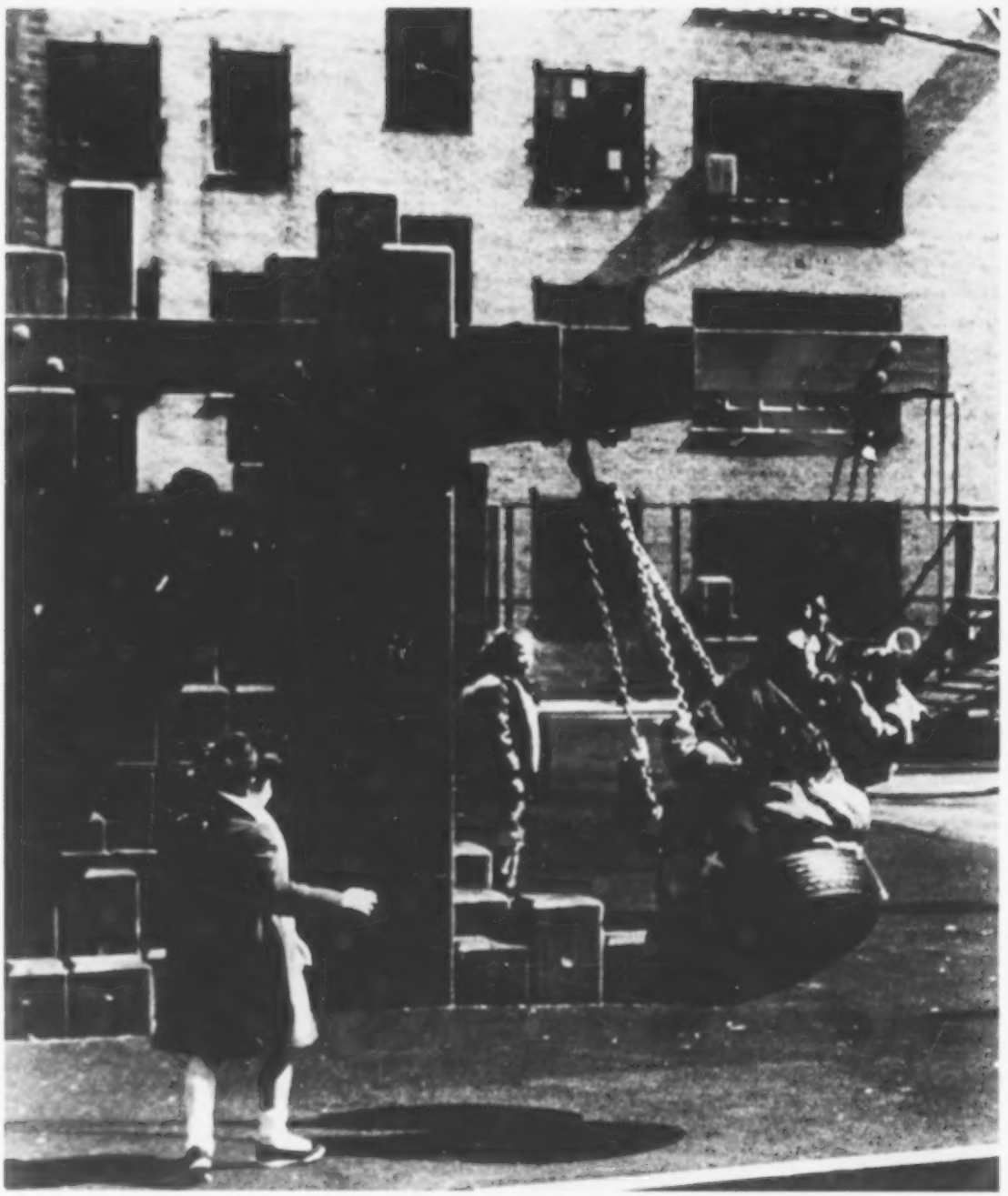
Yesenia Steven

Because of You

By night on my bed. I think about the one I love and I am his, among the lilies like an apple tree among the tree of woods. Please refresh me with a kiss that is so sweet because I am lovesick. I dream of you; your left hand is under my head and your right hand embraces me. As I look up at him, his eyes are like a dove's. He has become my garden with pleasant fruits, a fountain of love and happiness. I am dark and I am lovely. I am like a lily among thorns, so is my love for you.

Beauty is to gold. Let my love shine through the story I've told.

Sophia James



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ALL MY CHILDREN

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Inside of Me

Inside of me
are jelly beans
and hershey kisses
with fruit punch
and hot chocolate
a big sun
and sometimes
hard thundering showers.

The most beautiful
part of me is
the big round plate
I put all of these things on.

Sharon Smith

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Nakeisha's Birthday

When I gave birth to my daughter, Nakeisha, I did not even know I was pregnant. I was working and going to school. So I did not get enough time for rest. I was over at my aunt's house. I was there for the weekend. Sunday came and my stomach started hurting, so I didn't go home. I told my aunt I would go to school from her house. The next morning I was still in pain; this time the pain was worse. The pain was coming on stronger and stronger. By that time my aunt took her daughter to the doctor. I was all alone and the pain was just getting stronger until I started yelling and crying. My friend Toni came over to pick me up for school and I told her I was in a lot of pain.

I called my mother to tell her my stomach was hurting and I would call her back when I finished drinking my tea. When I drank the tea it felt like a balloon burst under me (my water broke). I thought I had urinated on myself. I started straining, only I wasn't doing it. When I looked down I saw a brown like water bag hanging down from my vagina. I thought it was a cyst.

So I called my mother back on the telephone and told her. She told me to get dressed and wait for my aunt Ann. When Ann came back I told her I had a cyst. She looked at it and helped me get dressed. I still was crying and screaming.

When we got downstairs to the car I didn't want to sit down in the seat, so I kneeled. We went to pick up my mother and they rushed me to the hospital. The nurse was asking me a lot of questions. When I screamed at her she put me in a wheelchair and put me in the room and told me that the doctor would be in soon. I started taking off my clothes.

Then all of a sudden I felt pressure and stood on the edge of the bed. Then I flew back on the bed and out came Nakeisha. I felt so relieved, it felt like I was in heaven. All these doctors came rushing in the room. The doctor said "Congratulations, Mrs. Greathouse, it's a girl!" I was in such a state of shock. I said, "Who had a baby?" "You did." When the doctor showed me Nakeisha I thought I was going to pass out.

The doctor told my mother and she passed out. I honestly thought my mother was going to kill me. She came into the room and told me, "You just better take good care of my baby," gave me a hug and kiss and told me she will always love me.

Robin Greathouse

Having a Baby

It is so much pain having a baby. There are the contractions, the vomiting and the fear. You're lying there waiting for the next something to hit you. Then there is the screaming and the yelling from all the pain. You can't do anything about it. Then tears, and more tears -- you're scared and crying, in pain, having all this fear, anger. All these emotions continue until the baby comes out. You start to push, you start to scream, you start to cry. Then all of a sudden you are so happy that the pain is gone and the baby is there.

Your face lights up with joy and you hear the laughter of your voice. Love is here. No more pain, crying, fear to be scared, anger. There is just love, joy, happiness and more.

Yvonne Jones

By Yvonne Jones

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The Miracle of Teaching

I choose to work with children because I love being with them and I want to show them things about the world. Also, I would like to teach them how to use their abilities to be creative and successful.

My experiences with caring for children were very interesting because I never had much to do with children around me. I was raised alone, so it was a magical adventure when I took care of a little boy named Christopher. He is such a loving, intelligent child that taking care of him was a "piece of cake." I enjoyed every growing moment of it. Each day was a new experience. I got to see a 6 month baby grow into an energetic toddler and I won't trade that part of my life for one million dollars. "I love you, Christopher."

Teaching. When you hear the word, some people automatically see a person, as a teacher, and a blackboard. This is true, but teaching goes a longer way than just that.

For a person who wants to be a teacher, there are some teaching methods which they should take into consideration. When you teach a child, you have to remember that this child is now learning about their surroundings and life.

Therefore, as a teacher, you must first have the main qualities before you enter a classroom. You must love children. This is very important because obviously you will be part of their life each day. Also, you must be hard working, understanding, observant, a good listener and unbiased. I lay out these because one relates to the other and without it you would not be able to communicate with children.

After you have accomplished these things you are ready to step into the classroom.

Sharon Garrick

Teaching

What makes a teacher great is the ability to teach the students no matter what age they are. I have gone to so many different schools in my life that I've seen all kinds of teachers. I thought that once I hit high school, everything was going to be very nice, and I figured that I was going to graduate, but I guess I was wrong. The teachers there didn't even care if you were in class or you weren't. That's one of the reasons why I left school.

Then I discovered YALA. The teaches here are the nicest teachers that I have ever had. These teachers have the ability to teach any age because they know what they are doing. The teachers here sit and talk to the students and help them individually sometimes.

My child care teacher is the most interesting teacher I have ever had. I have learned so much about children that I thought I already knew. If it wasn't for them being so helpful in everything, I think I would have left YALA too. That's what I think makes a great teacher. I hope to accomplish everything that they have taught me, so that I can be as good as they are for my future career in teaching children.

Ana Velez

Television -- Advantages and Disadvantages for Children

Television has many great advantages. It has many kids' programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Romper Room". It also features teenage sitcoms such as "Who's the Boss" and "Growing Pains". There is a variety of good talk shows, mysteries, action and comedy movies. It is very educational. Television also has its disadvantages. It promotes violence and makes drugs look good.

Television has many educational shows. "Sesame Street" teaches kids how to learn the alphabet and how to pronounce words. "Romper Room" teaches young kids how to work together and understand each other. "Who's the Boss?" shows how much a father cares for his daughter and how good it has been for him taking care of his daughter while playing the part of her mother and her father. "Growing Pains" teaches you how a family can hate each other, but yet love each other also. Talk shows teach you what is going on in the outside world. Mysteries teach you how to take on everything that comes in life. Action movies teach you how to go upon today's world. Comedies teach you to be humorous and not to take everything seriously in life.

On the other hand, television has many violent programs that convince young children they can do the crimes that are performed by the entertainers. The actors commit crimes and get away with them, so kids want to do the same and want to get away with them, too, but instead they end up getting caught. Shows like "Miami Vice" make drugs look glamorous. There are big drug dealers who have fancy cars and a lot of jewelry like Caldaron. His workers get caught, but he never seems to get caught.

Television has many advantages and disadvantages, but all together it has more advantages than disadvantages. Television's bad points can be fixed if the viewers insist on better shows. Parents should supervise their children while watching certain programs. There should be a rating such as R, PG and G before the television series begins.

Meritza R. Garcia

Teenage Pregnancy: Effects of Babies Having Babies

Teenage pregnancy is a very important issue throughout this country. Many people fell that teenagers should not be having babies. They say teenagers are too young and inexperienced to properly raise a child. Along with this, it has been stated that raising a child takes the wisdom which comes from maturity. They even go further by saying, "The responsibility of raising a child is too much for a teenager to handle; it will jeapardize their ability to finish school and hold a good paying job." Finally, they have come to the conclusion that there is no way a teenager can be a good parent.

In this generation, there are children having children just about every day. Many young girls, who have not gotten a grasp of their own lives and of reality, are trying to deal with another life. Babies are a great responsibility and are very time consuming. The reason my feelings come out

so strong towards this issue is that the babies are affected, to some great extent, by the choices of these teenagers, who sometimes in confusion make the wrong decision.

Abusive behavior, coming from the parents, is one effect on the child's life born into such circumstances. There are many young parents who feel that children have gotten in the way of their fully and successfully living their lives. These are the parents who often turn to their children and beat them, both mentally and physically. For example, I have a friend, Denise, who is constantly yelling to her child such remarks as "Stupid! It's your fault I'm in this situation." This child, in response, has shown signs of guilt and remorse. This child, Jennie, is greatly affected by Denise's decision in life. When in reality, Jennie is just an innocent child who should be properly loved. Denise is sixteen years old with no husband. Jennie's father abandoned Denise when he found out she was pregnant.

Denise has dropped out of school to work full time at a supermarket for minimum wage. She finds herself struggling from day to day; this is done to no avail. She then picks up her daughter from the Daycare Center and goes home. She really doesn't have anyone to help her emotionally or financially. So when she becomes frustrated, the guilt of not being able to do what she wants to is inflicted upon Jennie through some form of verbal insult. Quite often, she has gone as far as hitting the child. And when asked, "What happened?" she usually remarks, "That damned child gets in the way of everything."

Another effect on the children that results from most teenage pregnancies is abandonment. Many young teenagers tend to pack up and leave their babies behind, hoping that someone else will care for the child. This may stem from the realization that they are not ready to become parents. I say parents because fathers have a vivid role in the child's life. Many young fathers tend to disappear when a child comes into their lives, such as in my example with Denise. The child is then affected by the lack of recognition on the father's part. I'm one of these children who have been abandoned by their fathers. "Abandoned" because my father never claimed me as his daughter. I've never met the man, and until this day my mother won't even tell me his name. Due to their behavior, both my mother and father, I have always had a feeling of rejection lingering over me. Jennie, Denise's daughter, has the same kind of feeling. She, like me, feels left out of her father's life.

For these reasons and many others, I feel that teenagers should reconsider all perspectives of parenthood before deciding on adding a child onto their lives. They should be sure what they really want in life, and what they must go through to get these things. If a child is not part of these decisions, then the pregnancy should be avoided or eliminated. Otherwise, the child becomes a victim of this person's carelessness, and inability to cope with reality. Teenagers should capture wisdom, which does come from maturity, before making hasty decisions. I feel that "haste makes waste" and it affects the teenager's life as well as the child's. So when comments are made by adults about how teenagers do not make good parents, they should not be considered negative criticism but as some form of objective advice.

Cynthia Saliva

Teacher

I choose to study childcare because I want to work with children. I know I can learn a lot from children. They are beautiful and fun to be around. Children brighten up my day; they make me laugh, because they do the funniest things. You have to have lots of energy and that I do have. I know I can teach them a lot and give them a lot of love and be their friend. I know I can do it, because it is my dream and what I do best.

I am ready and willing to teach and care for young children. I know teaching young children is not all fun; there are some hard times. Each child is different in lots of ways. You have to study each child to get to know how to deal with them. Some children lose control, but I can cope with that. You have to stay in control in order to put the child under control, and put yourself in their shoes sometimes so you can see what they are going through. Being a child is kind of hard, because a child goes through changes. There are things they sometimes cannot have, and they can't understand why. When they start school they cannot understand why mommy or daddy can't stay. Then it's the teacher's job to handle that child and get on their level. Saying goodbye is the hardest thing for children to do. My idea for dealing with that is to let Mom and Dad call on lunch hours or let the child bring something of the parent's to school with them. It might help.

It's a lot of work being a teacher. You have to be on your toes and have your eyes on them at all times, show them a lot of affection, love and care. You also have to protect them and teach them. They also can teach you a lot. The teacher has to be up to it and make it exciting and fun. You have to explain the work to the children, let them know your concern about what they learn or don't understand. My idea about teaching is, if you cannot handle it or have no patience, it's not for you, because you have to have that and more for children. Don't treat children differently from others. You have to have a lot of love to give; you have to give a lot of yourself.

I hope the field of childcare can offer me a chance to work with children for a long period of time, so I can be a success at it. I hope I can get what I dreamed for, some day having my own daycare center. Children are our future and what we as teachers or parents teach them will have a lot to do with their future and I hope it's the right thing.

Tabitha Beale

A Mother's Weeping

One hot summer night
There's a slaying
All over colors

One is black
the other is white

To the white the black is hatred
To the black
he is fearing for his life

Now there's a mother who is weeping
over a dead son who died in Bensonhurst

David Moore

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December 5, 1989

My dearest Tiffany,

I am writing you this letter because I want you to know just how much I love you. Tiffany, thinking back to the day you were born is a very happy feeling. I remember it as if it were yesterday. You were born 10:43 Tuesday night. I was really in a lot of pain for thirty-three hours. Baby girl, you were worth every second of it.

Everyt ime you cried I picked you up. Your grandmother always said to let you cry. I would never let you cry because your face would turn bright red.

Tiffy, you were very smart for your age. At three months old you learned how to roll off the bed.

At five to six months old you learned how to sit up all by yourself.

At eight months old you learned how to walk.

And when you were eleven months old you learned how to climb up the stairs.

Tiffany, I love you so much. You will always be my baby.

Sunshine, you're almost two years old now and I just want you to know that I am here with you forever and ever. So you don't have to cry when mommy leaves you because you bet your bottom dollar that I am coming home to you.

Things may seem kind of hard because I am back in school now and I don't spend the day with you -- that is because I want the best for you.

Tiffy, I think I said just about everything I wanted to tell you.

P.S. I love you Tiffany Annette McMahon.

Love always,
Mommy

Cheronda King

MEMORIES

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Ten Floors

ten floors of food cooking in pots
ten floors of doors with numbers and locks
ten floors of children laughing and playing
ten floors now 3 feet high and decaying
ten floors of friends and many good times
ten floors have crumbled -- the third was mine
ten floors of fire escape corroded with rust
ten floors of fire escape saved us
as I pass I see children running with friends
how I wish I had ten floors again
I know that this will never be
but it will always be home to me.

Adali Ramos

Grandpa

Grandpa sings, I dance.
He speaks, I listen.
Grandpa hunts, I learn.
He fishes, I clean.
Grandpa dies, I weep.
He's buried, I am left
alone.

Rosa Figueroa

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The Block That Never Sleeps

CHARACTERS

Mom, Son, Jeff, Dr., Keisha, Allan, Keith, Homeboy, Guard

Mom: *How was your day?*

Son: *O.K. How was yours?*

Mom: *By the way, on my way to the store I saw a couple of your friends being frisked by the cops.*

Son: *Do you know which friends?*

Mom: *I don't know, but what I do know is that I don't want you with them.*

Son: *All I asked was which friends and you gotta give me a speech.*

(At the door -- knock, knock, knock)

Mom: *Who is it?*

Son: *Who's that, Mama?*

Mom: *It's one of the boys I seen being frisked by the cops. Talk to him in the hallway!*

(In the hallway)

Son: *My moms told me y'all almost got bagged up today.*

Friend: *Word up, Five-O almost had our ass today.*

Son: *Yo, I'll be down the block in a minute. Mamma Duke ain't acting right.*

Friend: *See you later.*

(Back in the house)

Mom: *What was that all about?*

Son: *Nothing, he was just telling me what happened.*

Mom: *You ain't no damn lawyer.*

Son: *Here we go again, I'm going outside.*

Mom: *Come back here, boy!!*

Son: *Y'all niggers is still on this hot ass block. Y'all didn't have enough of Five-O fucking with y'all today.*

Friend: *Man, fuck the police, we gotta get money, word up!*

Son: *Yo! I'm going to see Keisha, that fat-in-the-back girl from the projects.*

Friend: *See ya!*

(Jeff comes in the house 12 o'clock that night and his mother is still awake.)

Son: *Ma, what are you still doing up?*

Mom: *I was just a little worried because you left right after that drug selling friend of yours knocked on the door.*

Son: *Out of all my friends I be with, did I ever get arrested?*

Mom: *No, but that's what I'm afraid of. You may be in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

Son: *I go to work everyday, I don't sell drugs and I try to keep my nose clean.*

Mom: *But your friends. . .*

Son: *Goodnight, I'll speak to you in the morning. It's getting late.*

(In the morning)

Son: *See you when I get home.*

Mom: *Be careful.*

(As Jeff is on his way to work, he runs into one of his friends, Homeboy.)

Homeboy: *What's up, Jeff? Let's go get a bag of smoke and smoke a blunt.*

Jeff: *Come on.*

(As they're leaving the smoke spot, a car is behind Homeboy and Jeff.)

Jeff: *Yo, Homeboy, do you have any beef because that car is following us and I've never seen them niggers before.*

Homeboy: *No.*

(All of a sudden 2 shots rang out from a 9mm and Jeff is hit. Homeboy runs to the block that never sleeps.)

Homeboy: *Jeff just been shot! Jeff just been shot!*

Allan: *Let's go tell his mother.*

Homeboy: *Come on.*

(As they are going to tell Jeff's mother, they run into Keisha.)

Allan & Homeboy: *Jeff has just been shot!*

Keisha: *For real? (With a tear in her eye)*

Allan: *Come on, we're going to his house to tell his mother right now.*

(They knock on the door.)

Mom: *Who is it?*

Allan: *Allan and Keisha.*

Mom: *What's the problem?*

Allan: *We have some bad news.*

Mom: *Don't tell me Jeff's been arrested.*

Keisha: *Worse than that, Jeff's been shot.*

(Mom screams, then a flow of tears.)

Homeboy: *He may be in Harlem Hospital.*

Mom: *Let's go!!*

(The door slams. They're off to the hospital.)

Mom: *Has there been a Jeff Blake admitted to this hospital?*

Guard: *Yes, he's been shot bad, there'll be a doctor out in a minute to tell you better than I.*

Dr.: *Is there a Mrs. Blake out there?*

Mom: *Yes, I'm his mother. Is he alright?*

Dr.: *I'm afraid not, ma'am, he's DEAD! ! !*

Mom: *(Hysterically screaming) Not my son, not my son. What part of the body was he shot?*

Dr.: *He was shot twice. Once in the heart and once in the back.*

Mom: *I can't take it no more, I must go.*

(2 weeks later)

Jeff had a pretty packed funeral. Lots of people paid respects. After her son's death, Jeff's mother moved down south because she couldn't take another day of "THE BLOCK THAT NEVER SLEEPS."

Charles Butler

HELL!

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DEATH

I've always known that everyone who's alive is going to die, but it is always unexpected.

I had an uncle named Warren. He was my father's brother. My uncle was a very smart and also a very dumb man. What I mean by that is he was smart in school but very dumb for becoming a heroin addict. He started using this drug when he was 16 years old. I never really got to know him. You can say I didn't know him at all. I met him when I was a little girl and that was the only time that we ever met. I heard a lot about him from my parents.

Well, now I'm going to get to my reason for writing this. My uncle was put in the hospital on January 31, 1990. He was put in there for an asthma attack. The asthma attack turned into a seizure and a stroke. On February 1, 1990, my uncle was brain dead and had a blood clot in his head. He was living on a respirator machine. My grandfather found out what had happened and flew up to NY from Georgia. When my grandfather went to the hospital and the doctors asked him if he wanted them to pull the plug he said no! Then they asked my grandfather, if my uncle's heart should stop would he want them to start it up again, and he said no.

Ever since my uncle was in the hospital, I put off seeing him. On Sunday, February 11, I finally got the courage to go see him. He didn't look as bad as I thought he would look.

On February 12, 1990, my uncle died. For some reason I kept thinking that he wanted me to see him again while he was alive, but I wished it could have been on better terms. It's kind of scary because my mother asked his girlfriend if he had any last wishes and she said yes. One of his wishes was to see his niece again. (Guess what, I was that niece.)

I have to say that my uncle lived a long life for being a heroin addict. He died at 51 years of age. Even though I did not know him, I love him.

Tawana Blunt

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I ONCE DID . . . .

I once cried
I once swore
I once screamed 'till
I just couldn't take
it anymore

I used to give so much,
and get back so little
In time it will work itself
out and I won't be stuck in
the middle

To the one who treated me so
badly and unfair,
I wish him no happiness, nor
any despair

I only know that
it would have been better
if I never grew to care,
but life sure as hell ain't
easy, and I know it isn't fair

This is what I once did, and I'm
happy to let you know
that since then I'm wiser and
stronger and I've allowed myself
to grow! ! !

Kim Montalvo

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A Memory That Is Always With Me

At the age of 17 I got married to a man who was 19.

I think that on our honeymoon I got pregnant. We were so excited, but I think he was more excited than I. I was so proud of my pregnancy and I was so happy to think that I was bringing another human being to the world and extremely excited to know that I was going to be a mother.

I gave birth to a premature baby girl. She was born with heart and lung problems. My baby, whose name was going to be Yessenia, died three days after being born. It was a very sad experience, but it was fun to be a mother, even though it was only for three days.

I don't blame anybody, but deep down inside I blame my mother-in-law. I kind of blame her because during my pregnancy she made me go through hell. But, hey! That's part of life. And even though she made me go through hell, I don't hate her, I just think, what goes around, comes around.

Rosa Figueroa

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Put Your Trust In Love

They said we'd never make it,
They said we couldn't last,
They said we couldn't overcome
The problem of our past.

They said that hearts could never heal
And trust not be regained.
They said that time could not erase
The hardships and the pain.

But I said we could work things out
As long as we were open and
Hid nothing deep inside.

And now we share the kind of life
They thought could never be,
Because I learned to trust in you
And you believed in me.

That's why I'm glad I never heard
The hurtful things they said
But only looked into my heart . . . .
And trusted love instead.

Kim Montalvo

Memories Times

Memories are treasures
time cannot destroy
The pathways are happy
to yesterday's joy
and a husband and wife
sharing smiles and tears
build up rich treasures
through their wonderful years
for memories of everything
shared and faced
are engraved in the heart
and cannot be erased
and the bond of love
grows that much stronger
as two people share memories
one year longer

Louis White

Blossoms

The orange tree blossoms
as the wind brushes against
the cold shivers of my heart
while we both lay down
our thoughts of growing as one.

The dreams that we cherish
only seem to fade away
like the lifetime we shared together.
Forever in love with the warmth of my heart
this relationship of ours
could go right to the top.

For as long as we share
this piece of life,
there is no more crying,
only room for blossoms
and a clear blue sky.

Dennis Sumlin

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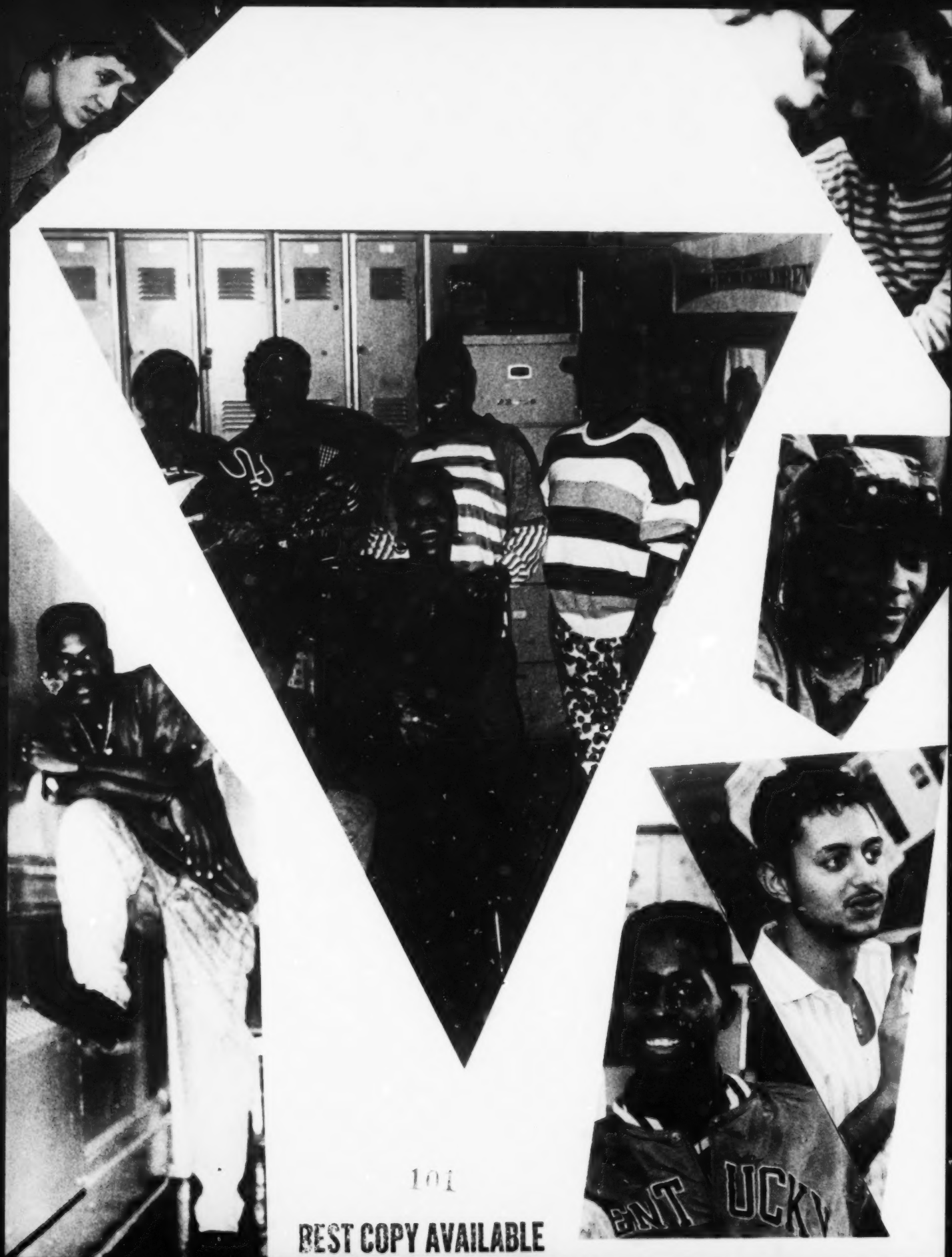

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